

Hera Love & Revenge by Jenny Fox

Chapter 11

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"...You're kidding?" I mutter.

Rebecca giggles.

"Come on Baby, take a seat. This is going to be the most entertainment we've had in a while."

"No," I protest, annoyed. "I don't understand... why the hell are we watching this?"

"Because I went through all the trouble of asking those asses of American vampires for help," Grace hisses. "So get your ass down on that couch."

I'd protest, if she wasn't already hissing at me and, worse, using her domination. She isn't very good at it, as I know I could resist if I wanted, but since no one steps in to support me, I chose not to fight. I grimace, and go to the spot they left me, right in the middle of the couch facing the TV. Bart also walks to stand behind me.

Grace sighs and plays it. I'm going to hate every single bit of this... Seriously, they sent an American vampire to film my funeral? What the heck...

The video starts amongst a crowd. A huge, chaotic crowd. It takes me a while to understand those young people aren't shouting; they are crying. I gasp as I see a young girl hold a picture of me. I... I'm at a loss for words. It's not a crazy crowd, but there are at least... three or four hundred people gathered. They can't... They can't possibly be all here because of my funeral?

"The information got leaked?" Asks Richard.

"Yes. They tried hard to conceal it but from what our friends said, some fan group released the information online and they agreed to gather outside. The fans had no intention to get inside the ceremony though, they just waited outside. The police didn't have anything to do, but they were called anyway, for extra security."

To my surprise, another fan, a man, holds a banner saying "we want the truth". ...The truth? What truth are they talking about? I don't understand, and I'm far too shocked to utter a word. I glance around. Everyone has their eyes riveted on the screen, looking either bored, or amused with a smirk on. The only one with eyes on me is Beatrix, staring from Richard's shadow. I can't stand her stare for more than a few seconds, and I have to go back to the TV, out of options myself.

It's... hard. Nothing's really happened yet, but just looking at the exterior of the church makes my throat clench, and my almost still, very slowly beating heart heavy. Those people can't seriously be my fans... I thought I didn't have any left. I keep staring at those faces, people who are just crying, and I can't even fathom a single of those tears is actually for me. Someone puts a cold hand on my shoulder, but I barely react. I'm staring at this screen like a lost child looking for this to make sense.

"...They told me all my fan groups had been disbanded, or deleted."

"Deleted my fine ass. ...Baby, you still have almost two millions followers despite not posting anything in months," scoffs Cecily.

I briefly glance at her. I didn't have anything to post! I didn't even have a phone to hold onto, the Agency took care of all my social media for me. I thought there was nothing left of it though... I get rid of my heels and put my feet on the couch, wrapping my arms around my knees. I don't care what Cata will say about my feet on the furniture, I just need something to protect me from the emotional damage that's heading my way like a cannonball. It just doesn't stop. Whoever filmed this got into the crowd of fans, filming around as they made their way through and to the church.

They finally reach the entrance, quickly getting past the flocks of those bastard journalists, and a couple of cops. Something is whispered, and from the way the cops body language changes, I'm guessing the vampire had to force their way in with a bit of charm.

"Is that our dear Abe?" Asks Rebecca, raising an eyebrow.

"The one and only," nods Grace.

Whoever Abe is, he must be friends with Rebecca, from the way she smiles from ear to ear. Abe finally gets inside the Church. There aren't many people, at least this bit isn't surprising. Barely three rows of people facing forward, excluding the cop standing on row six or seven. As Abe gets closer, I realize I don't know half of them. I grimace at the first back of the head I recognize. My Father.

He's standing taller than everyone else, rigid as a steel bar and just as cold. He's just like I remember. Wearing one of his flashy suits, although he made the effort of choosing a dark color. He got a haircut and clean grooming right before the ceremony for the journalists, I bet. I've never seen a man looking more bored at his own daughter's funeral... I can't help but glare at his figure.

"That's a lot of people for someone alone," comments Bart.

"They are there for my Father," I scoff. "Any good reason to suck up to him..."

As I say that though, another face catches my attention, and unlike my father, that person looks genuinely sad. ...My half-brother. I frown, a bit confused. I've never seen him like this. He's not crying, or showing much of his feelings, but there's something different from his usually cold self. His blue eyes look tired,

and a bit red. His shoulders are lower than usual, and unlike our father, his blonde hair, the exact same color as mine, is a mess. The young woman next to him holds on tightly to his arm, acting as if she wants to shield him. His wife. I remember her heart-shaped face and auburn hair from the wedding photo they sent last year, despite the fact that I never got invited. I was surprised she took a minute to send a note to his estranged sister. I never got to meet her in person, and now, I'm regretting it. She looks like a nice lady.

Abe walks up to the fourth row, and I'm guessing the camera is just attached to his chest, not visible to anyone. Nobody hears him, of course. He's probably as silent as they all are here. The priest is spouting some lies over my coffin about how loved I was, and more and more stupidities. Is that coffin empty, then? Or did Ethan fill it with stones? Another body, even?

"Hera."

Richard's gentle voice takes me out of my misery, and I realize I've been silently crying. While I turn to look at him, I realize the gentle hand on my shoulder is actually Cata's.

"Tell us who you recognize."

I frown at his strange demand, but I just look back at the TV to answer.

"...The tall man in his early fifties is my asshole of a Father," I sigh.

"Seriously?" Bart groans. "I've never seen a man looking actually bored at his own child's funeral!"

"Next to him with the dark bob is his latest wife, the fifth or sixth... The guy on his right is his secretary. There's my half-brother on the opposite bench, blonde hair with the young woman with auburn hair and the black hairpin."

"He looks a lot like you, Darling," comments Anna.

"...He's hot," mutters Cecily.

I glare at her briefly, before I go back to the screen. I sigh. There really aren't many I recognize...

"In the second row with that ugly ass hat is the narcissistic bitch director from my Acting Agency. Next to her is one of my managers, and my latest makeup artist, but I only saw her twice... Oh, the two girls on the left end are two of their newest actresses, they couldn't act to save their lives but they did get under the recruiting manager's desk," I scoff bitterly.

I know all too well; the bitch on the left stole two of the roles I wanted, and admitted to me our skills had nothing to do with the results... Unless it involved her dirty mouth. I slapped her, and that got me to not receive any offers from then on, on top of a few headlines of how much of a bitch I was for "assaulting"

one of my coworkers. I can't believe they brought that bitch to my bloody funeral.

I keep looking around while the others comment on how pretty but dumb they look, and Lancelot's sure he's seen one of them somewhere, in an ad probably. There are faces from the agency I mechanically describe, but I'm a bit more surprised not to see... Oh, he's there, in the first row.

"My fiancé," I mutter.

Abe just happened to turn so the figure of the crying man, his face covered in a handkerchief, is right in the middle of the frame. He's wearing one of his favorite suits, and a huge, ugly flower in his pocket. His eyes look red, and his hair is barely combed back, not looking as neat as usual. A young dark-haired woman next to him keeps rubbing his back. I've never seen her before.

"Well, at least one person's crying," mutters Benedict, looking genuinely surprised.

"...He's acting."

Most of them turn their heads to me, surprised. Cecily frowns, and glances back at the screen.

"...Those are pretty big grown man tears, Baby," she says.

"No," I shake my head. "I'm an actress, and I can tell when someone's faking something like crying. The tears are real, the sadness isn't. And I know Charles, and I've seen enough real sadness. That's not how somebody cries when they actually grieve."

"...She's right," mutters Anna after a while. "Her half-brother's hands are shaking, but her fiancé's the most stable, still one in the room."

I glance back at my brother, who's actually close to Charles. I didn't notice his hands before. They are closed in two fists, tight. Is that why he's not holding his wife's? I see him very briefly glance towards Charles. No, not glance, glare. I'm so confused. Why are their reactions inverted? I thought Charles would be genuinely sad, I thought my half-brother wouldn't give a damn. The ceremony ends, and I'm guessing Abe missed most of it, which I'm not going to complain about. The priest asks the people to stay quiet for a minute, but while everyone has their faces down, I see very clearly my father take out his phone, and look at his notifications.

"...What an ass," scoffs Rebecca.

"His own child's funeral!" Protests Anna. "I can't believe the nerve of that bastard!"

"Told you," I mutter, more for Bart than for them.

To my surprise, he gently puts his hand on my other shoulder. I take a deep breath. I'm so glad I'm not watching this alone.

As soon as the ceremony is over, people start to leave the church, some subtly taking out handkerchiefs and sunglasses, more for the journalists than for their actual grief, I'd guess. My dad and his wife leave the Church almost first, as if there was a fucking fire behind them. I can't help but feel utterly disappointed, again. I don't know why. I should be used to it at this point. I should even be glad; that was the first time he came to see me for something that was actually about me since my twenty-first birthday.

"Are we done with this?" I groan, a bit hurt.

"No."

Richard's firm response sends a chill down my spine, as well as a cold wave in the room. It's not just me; I can't see those behind me, but all the others seem to stiffen as well. I don't understand what's the whole purpose of this, but I'm forced to watch the TV again, as Abe just keeps filming. As more people who didn't give more than two shits and their public image about my funeral leave the church, some glance his way, but it lasts less than a second. He's obviously doing something that's keeping them away, perhaps acting like he's praying or something. I'm guessing vampires don't mind much about Churches, then?

After a few seconds of seeing people leave the place like they attended a boring Concerto, I get to see who's left behind. Charles and the brunette behind him, my half-brother Arthur and his wife, and the priest. I see the priest mutter a few words of support to Charles, then turn to my half-brother. Arthur is cold as usual, as that icy stare he gives the priest visibly convinces him God won't share his good word today. The man in a white robe just politely bows and walks away. There are a few seconds of awkward silence, and to my surprise, Arthur slowly walks up to the coffin, his wife naturally following behind him. Abe is standing just steps away, and I can see Arthur's blue eyes setting on the oak with a complex expression I've never seen before.

"...How did this happen?" He suddenly mutters.

"I'm so sorry," Charles wimps under his crocodile tears. "If I had been watching her more closely... I knew she was unstable, but I didn't think she'd actually... I'm so sorry, Arthur."

"You should be sorry for my little sister."

His sentence shocks me more than anything else. I can barely believe what I just heard. ...His little sister? I can't remember us exchanging more than a few awkward stares across a crowded room, standing next to each other for a picture, or some vague memories of our dysfunctional childhood, when we were both forced to cohabitate in one of those awkward family patchworks our father's inability to keep one woman at a time coerced us into.

More than that, Arthur looks genuinely angry. His wife, who didn't catch on Charles' flawed acting, gently rubs his shoulder.

"Honey," she mutters, trying to calm him down.

The fact that my cold-hearted brother found such a gentle woman to call him like this goes at the bottom of the list of surprises today. Unlike her though, Arthur isn't the slightest bit touched by Charles' fake attitude, or he saw through it. I'd bet on him not caring though.

"...You were supposed to care for her," He hissed. "And you failed."

"I... I know you're sad, Arthur, but I'm not res--"

"Oh no, you are responsible for this," he retorts, cutting him off. "I'm not sad, I'm mad. I shouldn't have trusted anyone who came from Steven's entourage to begin with."

"Who's Steven?" Frowns Bart.

"Her Father," Grace answers in my stead. "Steven Starr."

"Well, if your half-brother calls your dad by his name, that says what you need to know about their relationship too, I guess..."

Arthur may have had it a bit easier because he was my Father's only son, his official heir, and his mom stayed around, but the divorce did put him through hell too, and he's smart enough to know our Father is still a shitty one...

On the screen, Charles acts faintly shocked.

"I... I'm not sure what you don't like about me, Arthur. I'm just genuinely sorry, and... No matter what you think of me, I loved June, I really did. I'm... in pain, too. I just don't want to argue with you, not here, not now."

"Fine," Arthur growls. "I'll see you at the Will reading, then."

"She didn't leave one," Charles frowns.

"...Funny how you're so sure of that."

My half-brother walks away, leaving a white as sheet Charles behind him. I don't get it. What the fuck just happened... I already didn't think Arthur cared enough that he'd actually show up at my funeral, but now he's even mad, and at Charles, too? What the heck is that about...

Abe seems to be one of the only ones left, with Charles and that girl.

"Are you alright, Sir?" She asks with a meek voice.

"Yes. Thank you, Clara. Let's just go."

He's about to, but then, his eyes stop in Abe's direction. I see him freeze, then make a confused expression, and walk over.

"...Excuse me, Sir, you are?"

"A family friend."

"A family friend? I don't think I've seen any name whose face I didn't know on the attendants' list," Charles insists. "May I know yours?"

"No."

Shit, is he going to be in trouble? I see Charles hesitate. In other situations, he wouldn't have hesitated, used his influence or my father's name to pressure him into giving his name, but not there. I can guess the impressive vampire is probably giving him second thoughts about it, as well as some major "think about it twice" vibes.

"...Is there something wrong, Sir?"

That voice. I freeze, wondering if I just didn't mistake it. That is New York. It can't be, right?

But I see a man walk into Abe's camera's field, and my heart goes for a violent loop. Holy shit. The cop faces Charles and Abe, glancing alternatively between them, and I very clearly see his face.

...It's Rick.