

# Hera Love & Revenge by Jenny Fox

## Chapter 21

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## Chapter 21

"...I hate the idea," groans Bart.

It's already the second time he said that.

"Chill, Bart, he's perfect for this," I chuckle. "The girls on the forum were unanimous. That photographer is a typical asshole, using his reputation to force them to do nudes. But, he does have some talent, and plenty of reputation in the field, which is why none of them has been able to sue the bastard... Too bad for him, I doubt he's ever met someone who could actually stand up to his schemes."

"...Yeah, I hate it."

I ignore him, and step out of the car. Cecily helped me pick out my outfit, and we settled for one of my new pairs of slim jeans, and a black, fitted tank top, the basic outfit for a model. With my high-heel boots, my coat and the black cap, I look the part. I'm also not wearing any makeup, which makes me glad for my new flawless vampire skin... I adjust the big glasses on my nose, another last-minute accessory I thought about, just in case.

"You wait for me here," I say, leaning against the car's window. "I'll be just fine, Bart. If he doesn't think I came alone, he'll be even more annoying to deal with, and I don't want to spend more time than necessary up there already. Okay? Just go and... have a drink while I'm busy."

"Very funny."

He keeps on a grouchy face, and his hands tight around the wheel. I know he won't leave the car and just keep listening to everything that's going on up there, but I'm really not worried either way. If anything, I'd be worried for the bastard waiting for me upstairs. Actually, this will be a good exercise for me...

I check the texts again. I'm a bit early, but so be it. Any girl should have been wary of a man that offered a shooting session at seven in the evening, but for me, it was perfect, right after sunset and with still enough time to prepare myself. I re-read the messages while getting out of the car and walking up to the building. It was quick. My shy text with a brief bio. His prices, sent an hour later making himself look very busy, but really, all I had to do was to send a couple of pictures of me. He said yes right away, thanks to Cecily's thorough catfishing expertise... I got a time and location for the very next evening. I did look good in those pictures we sent, and just innocent enough to be that rotten pig's type. Finally, I spent a while reading a long thread of girls complaining about his methods on an anonymous forum, so I know exactly what to expect.

"Hera!" He opens the door. "Come in, darling."

Damn, he is charming, for an asshole. Perfect white teeth, nice face, well built. He smells like cologne, good cologne and aftershave. I guess there's a reason so many girls fell for it. The more my vampire eyes look though, the more I find some imperfect details. A random beard patch under his chin, a faint smell of tobacco and whiskey, and his shirt not so subtly opened two buttons down on a hairy chest. ...Yuck. His mid-length hair and golden necklace tell me he thinks himself more handsome than he really is. Well, perhaps it is the comparison with my new male siblings that make him look horribly average...

"Good Evening, Sir," I say in my shyest voice.

"Sir? Please call me Scott! Your pictures aren't bad," he says with a bright smile. "You've got potential, but how come your Instagram is empty, darling?"

Of course he checked out my social media.

"Oh, I decided to delete everything a while ago and get a fresh start," I smile innocently. "I heard that your social media should be absolutely flawless, so I had to get rid of everything that was in there, I intend to manage it better from now on! These pictures will be my first step."

"Good, good! You know, I don't often have time like this for a newcomer like you, you got lucky. Somebody cancelled on me last minute, so here we go. And also, I do know how to recognize some potential when I see it!"

There we go, flattering me as if I should be so grateful he agreed to give me two hours of his time... I quickly glance around. We are obviously in his private apartment, so I guess the studio he mentioned is that white corner with the cameras and bright light set up in the living room. It may seem fancy to newcomers who have only ever taken pictures with a phone or a half-decent camera, but I know this is all pretty cheap equipment to put his hands on. Way to have girls come over making them think it's some professional studio location. There's a bottle of whisky visible on the bar of his open kitchen, and I'm sure the door isn't open on the bedroom just by mistake either.

"Oh, would you like a glass?" He offers. "I just usually pour myself a glass before work. Relax, I'm not the kind of asshole to force you to drink! It's just that it often does help to relax the newbies a bit!"

I was also prepared for this. The girls who refuse to drink get gradually pressured that they are just not relaxed enough until they actually agree to the first glass... I'll skip that part, and make it seem easy.

"...It's not too strong, is it?" I ask, using my fake shy voice.

"Of course not!"

Liar. At least, he's completely buying my acting. Looks like I haven't lost my touch... I glance at the large windows, with lots of natural light coming in. Well,

right now it's natural moonlight. I bet Bart is listening to everything from downstairs, his car is parked right outside those windows.

I take the glass Scott hands me, pretending not to see how he just checked me out from head to toe... with a good stop on my cleavage.

"You have great proportions, Hera darling," he says. "I'm sure you'll do amazing! Now, shall we get started?"

"A-alright," I chuckle, licking the sweet whiskey off my lips.

I put the glass down, just a bit left in it, and he saw it. This amount really does nothing to me though, so I'll have to act accordingly. The taste was a bit odd, even for cheap whiskey, so I suspect there's something else in it. Well, nothing to bother me. I walk over to the white corner, checking my surroundings as if it was my first time.

"So you've never taken professional pictures before, honey?" He asks.

"No, just with my friend... She's the one who mentioned you, actually, and she heard you were a pretty known photographer in the field."

That's free for his ego. He immediately seems to grow an inch taller, and nods, faking humility.

"Well, I like to say I do have a lot of very good relationships with some of the very best. If you work well with me, having my name on your book is already a very good way to introduce yourself to the agencies honey, it is a competitive world to step into! I could even say a word or two to some of my friends and get you working with the very best, very soon."

"I do hope these pictures turn out good," I smile.

"That will all depend on you darling!"

There we go. His ego on the line, we start the photoshoot. At first, I act shy, taking awkward poses, but acting exactly as he directs me, faking some new found confidence. Of course, I actually already know the basics of how to pose, where to look, the way to tilt my head and make myself look good. He's still happy to try and drop a few compliments, boasting about my curves, my "natural talent for this", and how I look good in his camera. There's a hint of flirting, but it's smooth, always an inch away from the line. Seems like he's perfected his game over the years, but it's always the same. The girls on the forum almost always mentioned they had felt flattered by his praise at first... I play his game for a while, giggling at some compliments, acting all shy and cute, yet confident and sexy when it comes to taking pictures. It's a hard balance, I need to look pro on the pictures, yet make that idiot believe he's got me dancing in the palm of his hand...

"You're doing absolutely amazing, Honey," he says after a while, checking on his camera. "Shall we take a little break? You must be hot! Let's have a drink together."

"Sure!"

More giggles, I agree to another glass of whiskey, trying to act like I didn't see him pour more than one normal dose, and drink it politely, like a good girl. That guy probably thinks he's being subtle, but his body language is all too clear; he's getting closer, and when he brushes my skin "by mistake", he jolts, surprised by how cold it is... Still, he's enjoying the hunt too much to realize I'm not the prey. I suggest we get back to it before he gets too many ideas; I do actually need him to take some good pictures.

"...Mh, Honey, you're doing well, but I feel like we're missing a bit of an opportunity here. Would it be alright if you drop the top? Just the top darling, so we can see that gorgeous body of yours."

I hear the faint tension in his voice; he's testing me. But I smile, and slowly, turn around, and take off my top slowly and shyly. I picked a simple black bra on purpose.

"...Amazing," I hear him groan. "Let's see..."

He snaps a few shots, and I'm fine with it; I've already shown much more on screen, this much isn't enough to make me shy. I still have to act the part though, so I pretend that the alcohol is working its part in making me more relaxed, and follow his instructions. Of course, it's not long before he suggests I lose the bra, too.

"Just for the sake of those pictures, Honey. It's always better when there's nothing like this stupid fabric, so they get a better picture of what you can do."

"Of course!"

Off the bra goes, but I'm not a child; I know how to pose so I show enough, but not too much. This time, I step up my A-game: I give him flawless poses, cross my arms left and right or give him the back view to hide my nipples; whatever he says, he can't make some bullshit excuse that I need to show everything when I'm giving him this much.

"...You're a diamond in the rough, Honey," he smiles not long after. "Come on, take off the pants now."

I smile, and obey. I can imagine Bart fuming in the car, but this is going just as expected. He's far too excited, and the shutter doesn't stop even when I'm just taking off my jeans. I pose, with just my simple black panties left, giggling and acting like a foolish girl who doesn't realize how wrong this is.

"Amazing," he keeps saying, getting closer. "Keep doing this... Yes, great..."

At least he's still shooting. He's getting close, though, too close. I know he's struggling because I do know how to pose, and he hasn't been needing to give me any directions for a while. He clearly knows what he wants next, but he'll have to play smoothly to get it this time.

"You know, it would be better if you lost the panties too, darling."

"You think so?"

I stop posing, and hand on my hip, staring at him. I cut off the acting, and his smile fades a little.

"That's just my professional advice, Honey. The real pros never say no to nudes! ...Look, if you're embarrassed, I can dim the lights a bit. Do you want another glass? It will help you relax."

He goes and quickly fills that glass. I take it, and drink it, while he smiles, thinking he won. When I'm done, I extend my arm, and drop the glass, letting it shatter loudly and theatrically on the ground. Then, I turn my black irises to him.

"You're a little piece of shit," I say with a smile.

He blinks, as if he wasn't sure he'd heard me right.

"E-excuse me?"

"You make all those girls drink until they weren't sure what they did, took hundreds, thousands of pictures of them nude, of yourself having sex with them, and then, you handed them the acceptable pictures, threatening to release the embarrassing ones if they ever spoke. ...Did I get any of that wrong?"

He stumbles back, completely taken by surprise. Not only am I not drunk at all, but my speech, demeanor and attitude did a 180. I'm now faintly glaring at him, trying to use my domination to intimidate him. I'm not sure if that's working, but he does look shocked and unsure at least.

"Y-you... I don't know what you're talking about," he groans. "I've had this kind of girl before, they just make claims to try and defame me, they have no proof!"

"Where are the proofs then, Scott?"

This time, I'm using my charming power. His lips twitch.

"I-in my laptop... I-In a secure... secure file..."

"Of course. But it's really bad to keep those images and videos without the girls' consent, right?"

"Y-yes..."

"So, I suggest you send all their pictures back to them tomorrow morning, with a long, long, long apology email of how much of a rat you are. And then, you're going to delete all those pictures from your laptop, and never, ever try that again. What do you think?"

He slowly nods. I smile, and slowly get closer. Why do I feel so hungry all of a sudden... Oh well.

"You're a rat, but you'll do for a quick meal."

I show my fangs, relish in the sudden panic in his eyes, and bite. Perhaps I make this a bit more painful than necessary, but... he deserves it, right? I suck, suck his blood with delight. Not bad, for a rat. There's an interesting taste... something a bit yummier than usual. I slowly enjoy each gulp, trying to count. I discussed it with Bart. I need to stop before ten... I try to force myself. Count. Stop, Hera, stop. You've had enough. After the eighth, I groan, but step back. He's still standing there, although looking paler, and wobbling.

"Now, forget all this happened. Forget me, forget tonight, and just do as we discussed."

I push him with my finger, and he falls. Unconscious, but alive. With a bit of luck, the glass on the floor will serve as a decent explanation for the blood stains...

Next, I walk over to the camera, taking the memory card for myself. Then, I quickly put my clothes back on, grab my coat, and walk out, leaving him there. Back downstairs, Bart's already got the car engine running. I give him my best smile, and get inside. He stares at me for a second.

"...What?"

"You're turning into a real baddie, Baby Vamp," he mutters.

"...Is that bad?" I tilt my head.

"I don't hate it, for one," he chuckles.

He hands me a tissue to wipe off the bit of blood on my chin, and drives off. I was less messy than usual this time... and that was good, too. Surprisingly yummy... I can barely believe I managed to stop, I could have emptied the bastard dry. I check the time, and it's not even ten. That was a nice idea. I feel satisfied knowing that I served at least one bastard some well-deserved revenge.

Once we get home, Cecily almost jumps on me to see the pictures, and we move to the living room, Felicia, Cata and Lancelot also gather around to see them. A bit proud, I tell them all about how I handled that photographer while the laptop starts.

"Ha!" Scoffs Cecily. "You're nice to have left him alive. I would have hung this idiot by his balls..."

"Cecily!" Cata protests, visibly shocked.

"What? At least Baby Vamp got a nice little meal. It's always better when they are a bit excited isn't it Baby Vamp?"

I freeze, confused.

"...What do you mean?"

They all go silent for a second, and Cecily laughs, her eyes going to Bart.

"Oh, please, Bart! You didn't tell her the best part?"

"I didn't think I had to..."

"What is this about?" I ask, completely confused.

"Sex, Baby," Cecily smiles like a cat in heat. "Hunger is Lust's sister. Desire makes blood taste so much better... You got your first try tonight, and that was just a sample."

...Oh.

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### Chapter 22

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"Don't start dragging her into your antics," Bart groans.

"Oh, don't be such a sourpuss Bart," chuckles Rebecca. "Baby Vamp's got to learn every bit of it, doesn't she? And this is by far one of the best parts of our new nature..."

"Still," says Cata, looking a bit worried. "She's barely learned how to feed herself, she's a bit too young for this..."

"I'm not some clueless virgin, Cata," I reassure her. "...But seriously? Arousal makes blood taste better?"

"So much better," Cecily purrs.

"That guy's blood was good, wasn't it?" Rebecca smiles. "It's a chemical reaction that makes the humans' blood even better, and even attracts us vampires to them. It's like a conditioned response, like some creatures are naturally attracted

by some smells or pheromones of their partners or prey, we are attracted by the healthy, excited humans. You'll find we're less attracted to intoxicated or ill ones, because their blood is less filling for us."Daily Latest update

Damn, that seems true. Thinking back, the guys from the bar were definitely excited by me, but the cheap alcohol they were intoxicated on helped minimise my thirst. I can't help but lick my lips. Scott was a disgusting character, but his blood was the most delicious I've had since I transformed, and by far...

"You should have seen, back in the day," chuckles Cecily. "There used to be some mean parties going on, with lots of sex and blood..."

"Your orgies almost got us in a lot of trouble is what you forget to mention," hisses Bart, sitting next to me on the couch. "Or did you already forget Richard had to intervene before we got exposed?"Daily Latest update

Now, I'm curious what that's about... Although from the grimaces Cecily and Rebecca make, I'll take a guess that it is not the first time the duo of vampire ladies got in trouble. Perhaps that explains why they were so hands-off with me too. I probably wouldn't have been able to get away if it had been Bart or Swithin watching me yesterday.

"Pleasantries aside, Darling, those pictures are quite amazing," says Lancelot, staring at the screen of my laptop. "The lad took some good pictures but more than that, you do have some real talent!"

I can't help but feel a little proud hearing his praise. It's the first time in a while that I've worked, and been sincerely praised for what I did. For a while, everyone in the living room reviews the pictures with me, arguing about the best ones to keep for my book as a model. Scott the Bastard actually had time to take hundreds of shots before I bit him, so there are plenty to choose from, and everyone gets quite interested.

"You shouldn't have let him take some in your panties," groans Bart. "The man's a pig."

"Let's just delete them," nods Rebecca, suddenly taking the laptop from me.

Before I can argue, she quickly deletes the most "naked" pictures of me, and even argues about a couple more that Lancelot or Bart are speaking against. I have to admit, I'm a bit amused to see my hundreds of years-older siblings trying to protect the naive twenty-five years old I am. Or perhaps it's their more conservative views speaking, but none of those pictures of me in underwear are nearly as racy as blood orgies...Daily Latest update

In the end, I'm left with a pretty impressive stack of about a hundred pictures that everyone agreed on, and Cecily sets herself next to me in the living room to start editing them. I have to admit, although I've seen that process a couple of times, I know literally nothing about photo editing, but it quickly proves to be more interesting than I thought. Rebecca has work to do so she leaves us to it, while Bart, uninterested, just starts playing on his phone at one end of the sofa,



and Cata goes back to the kitchen, only coming back regularly to pour us some tea. To my surprise, Lancelot is surprisingly knowledgeable in photography and modelling as well.

"I did some work as a model, a while ago," he explains. "Turns out there is a lot of money to be made even when you're a bit of an aged wine..."

Cecily rolls her eyes.

"Please spare us another story, Lance. If your ego inflates any more than this, it's going to explode..."

I have fun listening to them bicker, but I'm more focused on the actual work at hand. Are those photos really going to be enough? I'm barely learning to accommodate and learn from my new body. I clearly remember taking those pictures just tonight, but the killer with her gorgeous red hair, lean body and burning stare in there still feels like a bit of a stranger to me. I tried to copy what I thought a model should act like, who I thought Hera would act like...

"You don't like them?"

I suddenly realise Cecily's caught on to my strange expression. I shake my head.

"No, they're fine."

"Fine?" She scoffs. "I'm jealous of you right now, and that's despite loving absolutely everything about myself. I'm never going to grow those inches nor have that body type, Hera. You should feel blessed with what you have. I don't know how underappreciated you've been until now, but it's about damn time you start to realise your talent. You can afford to be your own product. Most humans out there spend hundreds trying to be prettier, taller, thinner, or whatever is the decade's trend. You are a beautiful piece of woman, Baby Vamp, so own it. You nailed that photoshoot and even got a bastard bleeding. Don't you dare think this is only half good as it is."

Her words hit me like a truck. I can't remember the last time I've genuinely appreciated something about myself. ...Why was I feeling like this body wasn't mine? Sure, the vampire glow-up helped, but it is still my body. It's not so different from the one I had just a week ago. It's the same height, the same features, and the same person inside.

Hera isn't... somebody else. She's me, a new me born from the ashes June left behind. Like... Yeah, like a butterfly out of its chrysalis. There's no shame in being different. Some people go on diets, some people wear makeup or change their hair color. Some get fake tan, some bleach their teeth... I'm not so different. I'm just the next best version of myself. Daily Latest update

"Thanks, Cecily."

"You're so welcome. Now, as touching as this was, can we go back to business? I'm only in picture five and we need a good number of these to upload to your Instagram and prepare your book..."

I nod, and we get back to it. Although Cecily does most of the actual editing work, giving me lots of tips along the way, so does Lance. She also gives me a dozen references of videos and books I should check out to learn more. Lancelot is even more surprising. While Cecily has to tell him a few times to re-center the story back to me, he is incredibly knowledgeable about the fashion industry. He quotes some of the biggest names in the industry like they are just beginners, and from what I gather, he's been invited to at least a dozen of the most famous runways. Before I know it, we spend a good portion of the night talking about photoshoots, agencies, the history of the modelling industry, and everything I should know before trying to pass for a model. I'm enjoying this more than I thought, and before sunrise, I even get into some practice with Lance acting as my coach, telling me how to pose, ways to please the camera and all the basics of modelling. I don't think I've learned this much from the few gigs I got back when I was an actress. The more we speak, actually, the more I realise I could have done a lot more modelling even when I was just an actress. I mean, isn't it common to find some actress on the cover of a magazine, or acting as a model for some brand? Yet, I never got to do any work outside of the agency. More proof that Charles was micromanaging everything I did...

"Alright," Cecily smiles after a little while. "I think we got something to work with right there. I'm just going to take some of these, post it on your Instagram with a few hashtags, and get it running."

"Will that be enough?" I frown. Daily Latest update

"Of course not!" She sighs. "This is just laying down the base, Hera. Moreover, it's not like we're really trying to sign you with an agency, we just need to make it look like you could have. So, we need to build you a mini-career as a model, and make sure you can act the part from there on."

"We're going to need to have you shoot some fake photoshoots you would have done with that agency Swithin will be building," Lance nods.

"The agency is ready."

We turn around, and Swithin just walked in, his tablet in his hands, showing us some website page of what looks like a really believable agency. He shows it to me, and sure enough, under their "signed model" tab, I see my brand new profile picture, along with a few other unknown faces.

"My contacts already have it all ready," he says. "The other models don't exist but we somehow created a minimum of background on each of them, just in case he has the idea to look for them. The paperwork is shallow, but we covered enough of our tracks so it will look believable to anyone from the general public."

"You made Benedict the Agency director?" I frown, showing the staff pictures.

"We need someone to be able to act the part if he ever gets too curious," Swithin shrugs. "Officially, the agency is under his name too, although I used a fake name for him."

Indeed. Benedict is listed as Agency Director Benedict Ricci, twenty plus years in the industry, with a small paragraph of achievements, most of those probably fake. I see he also listed Vivian, one of the Heartgraves I've yet to meet, as the Agency Public Relations Manager... Aside from those two, all the other people listed there are unknown, but I suspect some of them might be real.

"Officially, I will be Hera's uncle who is helping her sue her previous agency for unpaid contracts and a long list of other management issues," he explains. "Charles Williams already scheduled his visit for later today, at eleven in the morning."

"Already?" I exclaim.

I didn't think I'd see that bastard so soon!

"We're the one pressing him," Swithin shrugs. "Plus, we need to trap that bastard before he can put a finger on your assets, remember? We have a whole lot to do if we want to expose him and get your revenge, Baby Vamp, hence why we're getting started and we have to act fast for absolutely everything. Cecily, how is her profile coming along? I need more of her pictures."

"I'm on it, you workaholic," she groans. "I can send you a few more this morning."

"Send them to Anna. She will go and get two framed for my office. I need to make Williams curious about Hera, so this will help. Hera, go get changed."

"Changed for what?"

"A daylight outing. It might not be pleasant, but your ex-fiancé is landing in a bit over three hours and we need to be ready before that."

I feel a rush of adrenaline all of a sudden. I didn't realize we spent most of the night on those pictures, and chatting about my new hypothetical modeling career. I run back to my bedroom, and under Cecily's advice, I pick a white turtleneck, a beige coat and leather pants with boots, a cap and glasses to hide my face. While getting ready, I can't help but feel the nervousness rise. Charles is coming to England. The man who pushed me to my death, ruined my life and made it miserable for months is coming here. ...What the fuck am I going to do? The rage surges again. I'd be able to kill him, I think. The mere thought of everything I have endured until now is driving me crazy. I stuff the cap on my head and the large glasses on my face, and run downstairs. I find not only Swithin but also Bart waiting for me. The first one added an elegant hat and a long coat, while Bart's face is hidden under an oversized hoodie, and he also put some sunglasses on.

"You're coming?" I ask, surprised.

"Baby Vamp still needs some proper supervision," he shrugs. "And since babysitting is my only option for going out..."

I chuckle, but I'm sure he's more than happy to come. Meanwhile, Cecily sighs in the living room.

"I'm going to keep working on those, but no offense Hera, if I see more of your pictures after sunrise, I might murder you when you come back. I need my beauty sleep. Swithin, don't you dare email me after sunrise."

"As long as you get what we need from you before then," coldly retorts Swithin. "Lancelot?"

"I'm on it! Just making a few calls, sending a few emails, we should have a couple of gigs for our Baby Vamp lining up by morning..."

"You're really getting me work?" I ask, a bit excited.

"I'm trying to, darling!"

"We'll see when we come back," says Swithin. "Hera, let's go."

I nod, and follow him outside. Soon enough, I'm back in the silver car, with Bart in the back seat, and we get in the busy London traffic. I guess we're reaching the normal morning time for humans, so the traffic is quite heavy. We make a quick stop so Swithin actually shows me his office in south London. I didn't think it would be a real thing, but it is. He has a proper office, with even his own gold nameplate with his actual name on it. To think you can find members of the Heartgraves family so easily feels strange to me... We only make a quick stop, though. Just enough so I'd be familiar with the place, as his niece should. Then, we're back into the car and on the way to the airport.

I get gradually more nervous as we get closer. I've got so many different feelings surging like various waves. Anger, Worry, Fear, Angst, and more Anger. I don't know what to expect. I don't know how to react, what to say. Swithin keeps telling me I'm not supposed to make contact, only watch Charles from afar and help him identify whoever he possibly came with. I can't say how much distance will be needed between him and I...

When Swithin finally parks, it feels all too soon. We step outside, in the sunrise, and I can't help but grimace, turning my back to the sun. It's too fucking bright... Thank goodness for the sunglasses. Without a word, we quickly walk inside, towards the International Arrivals Hall. Once inside, Swithin glances at the board.

"Shit, they landed early... You two, go."

Bart grabs my arm, and gently pulls me towards the elevator. A couple of minutes later, we are standing on the concourse, with a great view of the people arriving from the different flights, but they would have to raise their heads to actually pay attention to us. Bart bought us a couple of coffee, although I really

don't need the caffeine. It just tastes fine to my new taste buds, and I'm glad to have something to hold on to while we wait...

I glance down, and Swithin is standing there, holding out his tablet with Charles' name on it. Was he supposed to meet him at the airport?

"...Relax," Bart mutters, giving me a little elbow bump. "You're tense and standing too still."

"You should be glad I'm not running down there to kill him myself..."

He chuckles, but doesn't add anything. I pull the cup to my lips, forcing myself to sip. ...Calm down, calm down. There's at least a couple more minutes before the flight from New York City releases its passengers, they literally landed just minutes ago, plus the border control time... While I'm trying to distract myself by glancing around, my eyes stop on a tall, male figure. He's standing in front of the doors.

"Fuck," I mutter.

This time, there's no mistake.

It's Rick.

\*Author Note: Thanks for reading!

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I can barely believe my eyes, yet the truth is there, in front of me, slapping me right in the face. It's definitely Rick. I had doubts about seeing him at the police station, but this time, it's not just a short vision in a blink, he's really right there, in front of my eyes, and he's not going anywhere. That tight knot appears in my throat again. ...Why the fuck is he in London?

He's standing right in front of the doors, arms crossed, jaw clenched, staring as if he can't be bothered to blink. It's been a few years since I saw him last, but he's barely changed. If anything, he seems a bit bulkier, and his black hair is cut neatly, short, unlike that beach surfer mid-length style he had when we were young... He's not wearing his uniform either, just some simple white shirt and denim pants, and a thick coat over it, perhaps a biker's jacket. I can only see him from the back, just a bit of his profile towards us, but that's more than enough for me to

recognize him. I can guess his five-o'clock shadow too... My heart tightens a bit. Shit.

"What is it?" Asks Bart, trying to find what or who I'm staring at. Daily Latest update

"...My ex, Rick," I mutter. "He's here too."

It takes him a couple of minutes to spot him amongst the crowd, but when he does, he clicks his tongue.

"So you didn't dream it after all. What is he doing here?"

"He's waiting for Charles...?"

That's the only plausible theory. He's waiting right outside the doors, and as I glance at the list of incoming flights, the one from New York City is just the most likely one. Or is there somebody else on the flight? From the way he's glaring at those doors, I wouldn't think so... But why? Why the hell did he come all the way to London? Did he find out Charles was coming here and followed him? Or did he hear about the fake apartment under my name? If Rick's really part of the NYPD now, he could easily get access to that kind of information. ...Is he really investigating my death? Shit, I wish he'd stay out of this.

"Hey, where are you going?" Bart asks, suddenly grabbing my arm. Daily Latest update

Before realizing, I had already taken the direction of the stairs.

"I just... I just want to check if that's really him," I mutter, unable to calm down. "I'll be quick."

"Swithin wants us to stay away, your ex will be coming out any minute!"

"If he is and Rick makes a scene, it will make things difficult too," I retort. "Just let me check, Bart." Daily Latest update

I free myself from his grip and walk away before he can say anything more. I just need to confirm... I just need to see him from up close. Maybe Bart's right, maybe I've gone mad. I know I should listen to Swithin and stay away, but I can't. A part of me is just begging to get closer, just a bit closer, to see him. Staring from afar isn't enough... I just want to see his face.

I quickly step down the stairs, people stepping aside as my high heels announce my approach. I get a few stares, gazes attracted to my red hair and white coat contrast, or people curious about my unusual appearance, like wearing sunglasses inside an airport. I ignore them all, and just walk around the arrival hall, circling around Rick from far enough, just trying to find a safe angle to see and not be seen. Of course, Swithin notices me, and I see him frown behind his red shades. Sorry, Swithin, I just need a minute... or a few. My heart tightens

every time I get a glimpse of Rick. There are hundreds of people in the airport, so even staring in his direction, my view is often blocked by the random flow of travelers. It's chaotic, but everybody but him is a blur. I see this scene as if everything in the background was out of focus, like those slow scenes in a movie. Except that nobody can hear the loud ruckus going on in my head, in my chest.

It's really him. He's older, of course, than what I remember of him. I'm choked up by regrets, and, much worse, by hope. Will he spot me amongst the crowd? Would he recognize me? ...Would he be willing to forgive me?

I stand there, still, for a few seconds, staring in his direction. He hasn't changed that much in the few years I haven't seen him. He has the same strong features, his large chin, his strong eyebrows, his deep, dark eyes. The sexy tan of his skin, and even that uneven nose I always loved to make fun of. I remember a much younger Rick, skinnier, too tall for his age and insecure in his skin. There's nothing looking insecure about the man I'm staring at. His shoes firmly planted on the floor, his strong chin, his determined eyes. My stomach decides to make a knot too. I step back, feeling a bit anxious all of a sudden. ...Is he still mad at me? Would he be mad if he saw me now? I don't know if I could handle it. Daily Latest update

I've been staring for too long. He suddenly feels it. His cop senses, perhaps, make him lose his focus on the arrival doors, and start glancing around. I quickly turn around, pretending to step in the long line for an overpriced airport coffee. Nervous, I try not to glance back, but this time, I'm the one feeling the stare. A shiver runs down my spine. Has he seen me, or am I just imagining this?

My phone rings, and I pretend to take the call while stepping out of the line. Some people stare at me, wondering why I bothered to stand in line for such a short time, or if there's an actual reason for those sunglasses. I sigh, and answer.

"What are you doing?" Hisses Swithin. Daily Latest update

"My ex is here," I mutter.

"...Oh. I see him," he says after a few seconds. "Is he going to be a problem?"

"Depends what would be a problem. He looks like he's getting ready to pounce on Charles."

"We can't have that. I don't like a Cop on our trail, and I need to get Williams' trust, this is a bother. Grab his attention."

I almost drop the phone. Shit! I turn around, finding Swithin with my eyes. Luckily for me, Rick's back to staring at the arrival doors, in the exact same position as before. How the hell am I supposed to get him to look away and forget Charles, he looks like a sniper waiting for his perfect window of opportunity... I glance around. I can't cause a commotion in a bloody airport, there's got to be security everywhere.

"Hera, hurry," he says. "The first travellers of the New York flight are coming out."

I hang up and glance around. I can't approach Rick, I need to find somebody and something that will distract him enough... A man walks past me with a heart-shaped balloon, and it gives me an idea. I look around, looking for a single woman. I find a young woman, sitting in the waiting area, a bit younger than me, with a cringe orange tan and platinum blonde hair, apparently alone and busy on her phone, she's not looking up. I quickly go and sit right next to her. When she glances at me, curious to see who sat next to her, I give her a smile. She smiles back, a bit awkward.

"Hi," I say with an attractive smile.

"Hi," she answers, visibly a bit curious about me. "Do we know each other?"

"No, I'm just waiting for a friend. You too?"

"My Nan. I'm supposed to get her but her flight's bloody late..."

I subtly slide my glasses down my nose, and focus on the bit of Charming I've done before.

"Do you see the young man standing in front of the doors, with the biker jacket?"

"Yes...?" She mutters, under my power.

"You find him very attractive. You should try and get his number. You really, really want his phone number."

"That's true..."

She slowly gets up, and sure enough, she quickly walks up to Rick, arranging her hair, clothes and attitude on the way. A bit amused, I see her approach him, flaunting a smile, putting a hand on his arm. Hey, hands off... Shit, I'm an idiot. He glances at her, visibly confused and losing his focus. I know I purposely picked a girl he'd never be attracted to, but it still annoys me quite a bit to see his attention suddenly absorbed by this English girl. I cross my arms, staring at the scene, a bit annoyed. At least, it worked. More people come off the NYC flight and he just can't get rid of her. Damn, Rick, you idiot, are you seriously blushing? I roll my eyes, and go back to staring at the entrance. More people come out of the doors... I spot Charles. He's not alone. That brunette from my funeral is here too, plus a man I've never seen before, and another woman, an older one, perhaps in her forties. Never seen her either. Quickly, Swithin walks up to him, introduces himself. They shake hands, and Swithin escorts them outside. I glance back at Rick. He's spotted Williams, and he's desperate to get rid of the blonde to walk up to them, but they are on the other side of the arrival hall. It's too late. I smile, and get up.

Bart quickly arrives by my side as we head towards a different exit.



"Your jealous face was epic," he mocks me.

"Shut up. I did what Swithin asked..."

I glance towards the blonde. If only there was a way to stop the charming from afar... Bart chuckles.

"Poor Baby Vamp. Seeing your two exes the same day, a bit rough isn't it?"

"If you don't shut up, I swear I'm breaking all your game consoles as soon as we get back."

"Tsk."

We quickly try to walk out, but as the travelers from the states get out, there's a bit of a crowd already, and we have to slow down to try and walk around groups and families reuniting. I can't help but smile at a pair of children running into their grandparents arms. My last experiences of airport arrivals were always drowned in the blinding flashes of dozens of paparazzis...

Shit, I lost Bart. I glance over, and he's giving me a grimace from across what seems to be a small group of teenagers, perhaps a school trip of some sort. Shit, shit. I got some eyes on me, I'm standing out with my flashy appearance and my height. I try to walk around them, adjusting my sunglasses on my face. They can't recognize you, they can't recognize you, calm down... I lost Bart, but I've managed to clear my way to the exit.

"June...?"

I stop, one second too late to realize I shouldn't have. Don't glance that way. It's definitely Rick's voice, but I can only guess how far back he is on my left-back corner. Just a few steps, maybe. If it wasn't for my vampire hearing, I wouldn't even have heard him across the crowd. I stand still, frozen. I want to look so bad. I want to see the look in his eyes, see how he's looking at me right now, what his feelings are. Anger? Sadness? Regrets, perhaps?

...Shit, stay strong. I see him in the corner of my vision. Less than a second has passed, but I have to make a decision. I resume my walk, as if I hadn't heard him, just a bit faster and in the opposite direction. I hope it doesn't show in my walk how insane I've become right now. Every cell of my body is screaming to turn back, face him and tell him the truth, or tell him to stay away, but I can't. I force myself to put one foot before the other, towards wherever the fuck Bart's gone to. It's the worst sensation ever. Knowing he's right there, he's just steps away from me, and I can't go to him and tell him everything. I feel my heart breaking again. How many more times will I have to be so cruel to him? Rick doesn't deserve all the shit I've put him through, why is he even still crossing paths with me? I force myself to keep walking, a bit faster, ignoring my head, my heart, my stomach and everything around me.

...I must have dreamt that. He couldn't have recognized me. Perhaps he saw a blonde in the crowd and got confused. Perhaps it was even just some stupid

magazine with my face on it. I have scarlet red hair, huge shades and a cap on. How the hell would he have possibly recognized me? ...There's no way.

Thank God I step out of that damn airport, and I spot Bart, waiting for me in the Taxi area with a strange expression. I walk up to him, angry, and just hop into the first available black taxi without saying a word. Bart follows right behind me, and it's only after he's closed the door and begins chatting with the driver that I dare look out the window, towards the airport's exit. No sign of Rick. I let out a faint sigh of relief, but if I'm honest, I know I'm as relieved as I am disappointed... It's a strange feeling. The car starts and drives away into the long line of cars trying to leave the busy airport. I close my eyes and rest my head back, my whole body still shaking from the experience.

"What the hell happened?"

"...I think Rick may have recognized me," I mutter with a hoarse voice. "Maybe I imagined it..."

"No, I meant between you and that guy, Hera," He groans. "You're definitely not over him, and it seems to me he's not over you either, so what the fuck happened that you left him for that shithead?"

He glances at the driver, probably careful not to slip anything too dangerous about our kind, my identity or my death. I glare at him, but he shakes his head.

"Don't give me that look," he grunts. "Cecily might be too self-absorbed to care, but I recognize a broken heart when I see one, I've had my fair share over the centuries over the years. Plus, this guy looks like he's not going to let go of that bone, so we need to know what to expect if he's after Charles too."

"He... Rick hates Charles," I mutter. "And he has a strong sense of justice. Too much, even. He's not going to let go... He doesn't know the real reason I left him, Bart, and before you ask, I don't want to talk about it, alright? I'll tell you when I'm ready, but not now. Just know that... Rick and I were friends for years, then we got together for four of those years until I broke up with him. The breakup was hard on both of us. He tried to reach out a few times, but... every time, I was too afraid to tell him the truth, and I couldn't leave Charles. Rick and I... We came from different worlds."

"You're really in different worlds now," Bart retorts. "...And why do I have a feeling your ex-fiancé has something to do with the breakup?"

I don't answer, and look away, at the cars passing by the window. ...Charles had everything to do with me leaving Rick, but it was my fault. I was an idiot, a complete, absolute idiot. My mistake caused this, and a lot worse. Shit, I don't want to think about this, not now. I need to focus.

"...You said your ex didn't take the break up well?" Scoffs Bart.

When I glance back, I realize he was just looking at his phone. He puts it back with a grin.

"He's definitely not going to let go. Swithin said his car is being followed. By some dude on a bike..."

Oh no, Rick, for fuck sake...



\*Author Note: Thanks for reading! As always, please or two, like the chapter, and see you in the next one! ^^