

Hera, Love & Revenge by Jenny Fox

Chapter 8

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"...That is none of your business, Bart" I mutter.

What the heck is wrong with him? He looks absolutely furious, and almost disgusted with me!

"Oh, hell it is!" He shouts. "Why do you think we're like this, and look like this? I didn't choose to die at twenty-two and become a blood-thirsty monster! Not a single person in this family got to live until they were old, nor die a natural death! Some got killed in accidents, some had it even worse! But you actually fucking went ahead and committed suicide? What the actual fuck is wrong with you! You've got to be kidding me!"

"You know nothing of me! You think I just decided to die on a whim? You think that was a fucking tantrum?!"

"That's exactly what it is! Selfish bitches who can't cherish their life when they were humans shouldn't get to come back!"

"I didn't choose to become a vampire!" I shout back, annoyed. "You think I just asked Richard to give me a reset? I would have died there and then and that was all I asked for! I didn't choose to come back!"

"Then you shouldn't have! You're just a selfish bitch who chose to make a drama out of her life and now is having fun playing her latest role! Do you know how many people commented under this article alone? It's not like you had nobo-"

Absolutely furious, more than he is, I walk over, grab his phone and violently throw it across the room under his astonished eyes.

"You know fucking nothing of this selfish bitch!" I yell. "I died all alone in a hotel room in the busiest city in the world! I didn't have a place to call home, not a single family member to care enough to call me when I was about to end my own life! Hell, they couldn't even be bothered to remember my actual birthday, why would they care about my death! Those people commenting don't know shit about me! June Starr, the rich daughter of a conglomerate mogul, pathetically died alone in her hotel room! You think a tabloid about my death is a big deal? I've been plastered in those shit magazines my whole damn life, and I hated every single word they typed! I lost every single friend I ever had for those followers! I couldn't take one step outside without being harassed, I couldn't see anybody without their privacy being invaded! Every time I tried to get a phone to call my friends, within a week my number was leaked and I had to throw the damn device away so it would stop buzzing, ringing, driving me crazy all over again! Every time I moved, the building would get crowded and I was forced to move out again! The

only friend I had moved overseas to get peace, and I never heard from her again! Do you know what it's like, to have absolutely nobody to call, nobody to talk to when you're at your lowest? My own fiancé couldn't care enough to call me, my own father barely remembered I exist at all! Do you know why I chose to become an actress, Bart? Why I accepted every bullshit movie, the dumbest roles? Why I lived for nothing but the next lines to learn, the next scene to shoot? Because I was desperate to be on every single screen of the country, so all the people that ever mattered in my life would stop ignoring me!"

He gasps, visibly out of words, but after a while, he just turns to Richard, who is staring at me with some complex, undecipherable expression.

"...You should have left her where she was. No wonder she had so much fun playing one of us. This is all just a game to her."

"Fuck you, Bartholomew," I hiss.

He glares at me, and leaves the room. We hear his bedroom door slam a second later. A heavy silence befalls the room, and Cata clears her throat.

"I... I'm going to check the pantry."

I don't care what she does. I cross my arms around me, and just walk to the salon, putting my butt down on the couch. I'm still shaking with anger. It's so annoying that Bart can hear me probably anywhere I'll go in this house... Hopefully, he's got his headphones on and he's raging at some game. A few seconds after me, Richard walks in the living room as well. He puts Bart's destroyed phone in front of me on the coffee table, and sits down in the armchair, looking at me.

"...He's right, Richard," I mutter. "You shouldn't have brought me back."

"Why not?"

I turn to him. The question is why did he? His piercing blue eyes got me confused, and too shy to ask, which is getting really frustrating. I take a deep breath for nothing but to calm myself down.

"...I didn't commit suicide just so I would be brought back."

"No one ever dies expecting a second chance either."

"But why? ...Richard, if I'm going to meet another dozen vampires tomorrow and they have the same reaction as Bart, I would rather not. I've dealt with rejection one too many times in my human life already, I can't."

A smile appears on his lips.

"They already know who you are."

My jaw drops.

“What?”

“You underestimate my children if you think they wouldn’t be interested in their younger sister’s whereabouts. No one here simply starts over, Hera. Your human life might be over, yet it does not simply vanish from your memory. June Starr will still be a part of you, and you cannot hide her forever. Not from your family.”

I lay back against the couch, completely defeated. Damn it. So it’s already too late? ...What will the others say, or think? There is just no way they will all be as nice and understanding as Catherina or Richard...

“How are you enjoying London?”

The sudden shift of topic takes me by surprise. I glance at the night outside, and shrug.

“Not as bad as I thought... I doubt Bart’s going to take me out again though.”

“He’ll come around.”

A brutal noise of someone kicking the floor answers Richard. Bart, you ass.

“Anything you want to do with your new freedom?” Richard asks. “Once Riki is done with you.”

Right... I have a very long time ahead of me now. It’s blank in my mind, though. I’ve spent so long stuck between four walls, with nothing to do but watch shows and movies, I don’t even know where to start with what I want to do. The truth is, being in London makes it a bit easy. Back in New York City, every time I stepped out of a building, I had to run to the car and quickly move to some shooting location or a red carpet. I can’t even remember the last time I simply went to a supermarket, or a coffee shop. I couldn’t help but glance at the ones we walked by earlier, but Bart would have thought I was a bit mad if I’d told him I wanted to walk around some tiny corner shop... It’s not like I’d even be possibly wanting to buy a candy bar or something. Plus, I always have some intense self-awareness of cameras, even the surveillance ones.

“Hera.”

Richard’s voice snaps me out of my thinking.

“You can do whatever you want, now,” he gently says.

It’s like something unlocks. A wall crumbles, and that heavy, heavy pressure I have felt on my heart all along just vanishes. Right... I’m free now. There are no more cameras, no more fans or stalkers. No manager to control my every movement, no agenda, no fiancé to tell me what to do. There’s literally nothing, no one expecting anything of me anymore. To my surprise, a tear comes up, and I wipe it quickly, a bit embarrassed. Richard is still staring, with that faint smile.

"I think... I'd like to go shopping," I mutter. "I kind of want to have my own clothes, I don't have anything here..."

"I'm sure some of your older sisters will be happy to take you."

I nod. That's if they don't hate their selfish bitch of a suicidal little sister... I'm still bitter about Bart's reaction. I glance down at the phone, but truthfully, I don't really feel sorry about having smashed it.

"Anything else?"

"Just... Normal stuff," I mutter. "Hang out with people... learn to be Hera the vampire."

"That's a good start."

"Do I have to... pay you in some way?" I ask, a bit worried. "I mean, I don't have any money for the clothes, but if I can repay you later, I will."

Do vampires even work? Bart and Cata seem to stay at home all night and day long, is that the norm? I mean, it's not like they really have an issue with food nor lodging... But Richard chuckles.

"I appreciate the thought, but no. I can provide for my new child, and you'll only get to make your own money when you actually feel like it. For now, you do not need to worry about that."

That's good. I can't remember managing my own money nor buying anything for myself in the past few years, so it's actually a bit thrilling. I wonder if there's a budget or something though. It's not like I got to wear much of those popular brands before. While I was wearing stuff from high-end brands and custom creations for the sake of the screen, I always envied the young women my age for doing their own shopping, chatting about the latest trends and actually owning clothes that smelled like them... Well, if Richard can own a house like this in the middle of London and a Private Jet, I doubt my shopping habits will bankrupt the Heartgraves family anytime soon...

"So... What do you usually do when you're not hunting?" I ask, glancing around the living room.

I didn't pay much attention when I angrily barged in, but it's actually a pretty large one, enough to hold two three-seat couches and two armchairs in a half-circle, a bar, a cabinet with a lock, and a couple of big bookcases. I don't think I've ever seen this many books in a building that was not a library... I wonder what's in that cabinet too. Some secret vampire stuff? There's a large flat screen above the fireplace, and on the glass coffee table, a large and fresh flower bouquet. There are also more of what I suppose to be Catherina's plants, taking a spot on the bookcases or hanging on the wall. In fact, the whole room is a nice balance between the old but well taken care of oak furniture and some modern things like the radio on top of the cabinet, the modern bar, the glass coffee table

and the tv. One of the doors on the side leads to what I assume to be a back garden, the other two to the kitchen and the main corridor.

"Everyone has their own hobbies," Richard smiles. "I have some work, but feel free to cook with Catherina, or find a book to your liking. I would have suggested you ask Bartholomew for a game, but... My guess is that he's not in the ideal mood for that, right now."

I nod, and look around the room. There are so many books... Perhaps I should catch up on some history before meeting the others? I wouldn't know which century to start with, though. My eyes fall on the little locked cabinet again, and Richard notices.

"...Curious?"

"Is it... something I can look into?"

"At your own risk," he smiles enigmatically. "But I'm warning you, it's pretty addictive."

Is it alcohol, or drugs? Well, he said I can look... While I'm pondering, Richard gets up.

"I have to work now, Darling, but you can come up to my office anytime. Be careful not to bother Agnes again, she likes her alone time."

My guess is that she likes to be alone all the time, but I don't say it out loud, and just nod obediently. I watch Richard leave the room. I still have half a billion questions up in my head, but the night's been eventful enough... For now, I'm just curious about that cabinet. I get up, and go to check it. As expected, it's locked...

"Hera?"

Cata is standing on the doorstep, a whisk in her hand.

"...Richard said I could take a look, but it's locked," I explain.

"Oh, the key is hidden behind the Thesaurus, Dear. You can take it, but make sure you put it back after, and don't tell the others! They always end up fighting so we have to confiscate it..."

They end up fighting? What the hell is this about... I find the tiny key, and get to the cabinet, a bit excited. My bet is on some special stash of blood, or perhaps some drug? Cata goes back to the kitchen, and I open it. There are four boxes. I grab one, and open it.

...A Playstation? I chuckle. There's a playstation, and a good dozen games, with two brand-new looking controllers. I check the other boxes. There's a Wii, and even the recent Switch. I can't help but laugh. Then again, the last thing I

expected to see. I grab the Switch and a couple of games to try. I can't remember the last time I got to play a video game... I lie on the couch, a bit excited with the console. All the game entries are taken, but the first one belongs to Bart. Without a hint of remorse, I erase his data and start a new game. That's the selfish bitch for you, Bartholo-ass...

After what feels like just a couple of minutes of thoroughly enjoying hunting monsters, a gentle knock grabs my attention.

"Hera Dear," says Catherina. "They should all arrive in just a few hours, and the night is going to be long once the family's gathered. Why don't you go and get some sleep now? I will wake you up when Riki arrives, she should be here around six."

"I will. Thanks, Cata."

I turn off my game after saving it, and put it back into the cabinet, the key back behind the Thesaurus. Playing and forgetting the real world for a bit did me a lot of good... I feel a lot better when I slip back into the night gown and under the sheets. I have no idea how late it is, and I don't care much. I'm both worried and excited to meet the rest of the family tomorrow, but I shift my excitement to the appointment with Riki first. I just can't wait for a change...

"Wake up Doll!" A sudden shout wakes me up. "Time for a makeover!"

I open my eyes to see a young woman with the most colorful hair I've ever seen at the end of my bed, standing against the window with her hands on her hips, a big smile on. A female vampire, by the fangs.

"...Riki?" I guess, still half-asleep.

"The one and only! Come on, get up! Chop-chop! We've got a lot of work and only four hours!"



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