

Hera, Love & Revenge by Jenny Fox

Chapter 9

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In a matter of minutes, I'm dragged out of the bed, wrapped into a bathrobe and pushed into a bathroom, not mine but a bigger one in the house, which is not en-suite to any room. Riki is jumping all around and lying down an impressive array of beauty and hair products, so much I wonder if there was anything at all in that bathroom before.

"I'm so excited," she says. "It's been so long since I've had the green light for a full transformation! You're quite a challenge too, you're so popular and I have to make you look nothing like that! I barely had any time to study, but you've had some gorgeous carpet looks, Doll!"

I can only nod in despair. I'm pretty sure it's too late to run now. At least, Riki is incredibly adorable. She's smaller than me, of a petite stature, but her impressive, thick mane of multicolored-hair is hung in a high ponytail and floating around her like a rainbow flag. There isn't a single color she doesn't have in her waves, and it doesn't even look cringeworthy at all, the colors are beautifully arranged.

"Come on Doll, sit down! Any idea what you want? I'm thinking something a bit darker to contrast with your skin tone, with a matte lip look, and perhaps... How do you feel about green lenses? Or a chestnut-brown? We have to see how that works with your blue eyes... You've worn contacts before, yes?" Daily Latest update

"Y-yeah... And I'm fine with anything, as long as I don't look like this anymore."

This is staring at me from the large mirror right in front of me, with a grouchy expression. Well, I've already changed a bit from my previous appearance... The dark circles have lessened even more too. It looks like I slept enough despite the brutal wake up. I wonder how much sleep do vampires actually need? Thank goodness there are no windows in this bathroom because I thought the sun was going to blind me. I'm also still feeling tired, so I'm questioning how many hours of actual sleep I've had. How does Riki do it? I would have questioned if she was even a vampire at all had I not seen her fangs when she smiled earlier.

"Don't worry," she smiles. "Make-up is my superpower, I can turn you into anything you want! Alright, here are a few suggestions I have, let me know which one you like the most."

She hands me a thick square with little locks of colored hair lined up on it, one of those samples you see in any salons. There's a broad range, from a light, platinum blonde to dark chestnut hair, including even some cyan, bubblegum pink and purple. She meant it when she said she can do anything.

"Those were all made on a sample close to your natural hair color, so I'm pretty confident with the result! Even if you hesitate about a shade, you can tell me, I can go a bit darker or blonder if you want!" Daily Latest update

"Can we cut it?"

She pauses, looking baffled.

"Of course we can! And we will, if that's what you want! I can do extensions too, if you'd like to try them longer! I only brought a couple of wigs, if you want to try them! I only don't recommend cutting it too short, our hair doesn't grow as fast as when we were humans, so everything you do to them is a few-years' commitment. It's better for the color though!"

I'm completely fine with that, as long as I say goodbye to my long blonde hair. I can't remember the last time I even got to have any say about it... I once cut it myself on a whim, just a few centimeters, and the hairdresser had a literal meltdown. I glance down at the palette. So much choice... I want something drastic, but not too crazy. I don't really see myself as a brunette, either.

"Red?" I suggest, glancing at the two shades. Daily Latest update

"A good pick! If you really want a neat cut from your previous image, I recommend something dark, not too childish. We can't go too dark, but I think a nice Scarlet Red would be amazing on you..."

She grabs out her phone, and quickly searches for a few examples. I nod, convinced already. It's just the right balance between a non-natural color and yet just red enough to pass as not too artificial. I have no idea what it's going to look like, but Riki seems convinced. She winks at me in the mirror.

"Alright Doll, let's start by washing, a nice hair treatment and some cutting!"

An hour later, I'm starting to understand why Riki thought we'd need four hours. I forgot how long it takes to do a color, and on top of that, she's very meticulous. While the color is setting on my hair, she helps me pick some nice fake nails, teaches me about which colors of eyeshadows I should stick to from now on, and how to use some of the creams for my new vampire skin.

"Be extra generous on the sunscreen if you do have to go out during the day, Doll. We don't glow or actually burn, but we do dry like a jellyfish on a rock!"

Ew, that's one image I won't forget anytime soon... Lots of hydration and sunscreen, got it.

"So you do go out during the day?" I ask, impressed.

"I have to! I own a salon downtown. We are the only beauty parlor open until midnight, and may I say, the most popular for vampire ladies!"

“So you’re a Heartgraves too?”

“Oh, no, Doll, just a very good friend of the family. When my Overlord passed, Richard took me under his wing and was kind enough to let me establish myself here.” Daily Latest update

So even Overlords do die eventually? I wonder what a vampire does die from...

“Cata has my card, and you’ll get a discount if you ever drop by,” she winks.

“Thanks, Riki.”

“You’re welcome! Now, let’s see where your color is at, and try out those lenses!”

In fact, it takes no less than five hours to get me fully ready, and when I finally get to stand up, I can barely recognize the woman in the mirror.

She stands tall in some killer high heels, absolutely gorgeous in a long designer dress, covered in black pearls with transparent, black mousseline sleeves that show her long limbs. The only pieces of jewelry are the thick ring on her finger, and the collection of black and gold earrings on her ears, six out of the eight holes are brand new. Her neckline is bare and exposed, but her face is framed by some perfect blood-red curls. Her hair is cut in a layered bob, making her look both young and sophisticated. I stare at my own face, trying to see if there’s anything left of June. It’s the same face, but different. Hera’s traits are leaner, her angles sharper, and her eyebrows are darker, making her traits more prominent. No more babydoll-blue eyes, my irises are now as dark as coal, matching the thin traits of black eyeliner. Instead, the accent is now on my lips, a bit fuller, and crimson red, a shade darker than my hair. I don’t know if anybody would be able to recognize me, and... to be honest, I can barely recognize myself. Riki also showed me how to use contour makeup to alter the natural shades of my face, and trick the eye or even a camera lense.

“You’re not used to it so make sure you practice plenty! You can always drop by the salon if you want, I would happily show you again when I am available! I’m guessing you won’t be seeing too many people for now anyway, so it’s fine if you just remember the basics. Your nails should last a while, but if they ever break, come by as well!”

I’m wondering how much the vampire salon charges, but from what Riki said, it sounds like pretty much every Heartgraves is a regular. Done and satisfied with her job, she starts packing up, and my eyes fall on her little professional cases. I recognize a few popular brands, and I can’t help but think about Liz. I wonder how she’s doing now... Last time I heard of her, she had moved to Paris to work for that popular Brand. Is she still there? Paris is only a couple of hours away.

“Oh my, you look amazing!”

Cata appears on the doorstep, looking amazed by my transformation.

“Nothing like a makeover!” Exclaims Riki. “My work here is done! Hera, today was on me, as a welcome to your new life, so make sure to become one of my regular patrons in the future!”

I nod and thank her again. She might not be a Heartgraves, but I absolutely love Riki’s energy, so I’ll definitely be seeing her again. She leaves in another powerful whirlwind of colors, and I’m left standing there with Cata. A big wave of nervousness suddenly washes over me. I’ve been hearing people arriving since half an hour earlier while I was locked in the bathroom with Riki, and I can now hear at least half a dozen voices downstairs.

“Ready?” Cata asks with a gentle voice.

“As ready as I’ll ever be, I guess...”

She escorts me downstairs, and it feels like we’re going way too fast. I try to analyze the voices, but it doesn’t tell me much, except that Bart isn’t talking and Richard is downstairs. All the other voices are completely new. Some women are laughing louder than the rest. I also hear glasses, making me wonder what they are drinking...

“Hera, Darling.”

Richard greets me at the entrance of the living room, which is a bit of a relief. I glance around, discovering the other family members just as they see me.

I wasn’t far off: there are nine new faces. On my left, just steps away and who was just chatting with Richard, is a tall man, with his long, silky black hair over his shoulder, looking just a bit older than me, but I won’t be fooled. He smiles, revealing sharp fangs, and makes a little nod to greet me, visibly very polite.

“Pleased to meet you, Dear” he says, with a noticeable accent, either French or Italian. “Benedict Arnold Heartgraves.”

I reciprocate the nod, a bit intimidated. Next to him is another man, looking in his fifties, older than Richard, but surprisingly handsome with his square, clean-shaved chin and silver-white short hair. His blue eyes are absolutely stunning.

“Lancelot Heartgraves, pleased to meet the newest Lady of the family!”

“Lancelot and Benedict flew from the south of Europe to meet you,” says Richard.

“Of course!” Lancelot exclaims, with a large movement that almost empties his glass on the floor. “A new Heartgraves deserves quite the welcome party!”

“Lance, calm down,” sighs Benedict. “You’re making a spectacle of yourself again...”

While the two of them argue, I keep smiling politely, but my now dark eyes drift past them. In a corner near the bookcase, there is a couple, the man with an arm around his partner's shoulders, softly speaking to her, while she's staring at her blood-filled cup with a worried expression. I wonder what's up with those two... Not far is Bart. We briefly exchange a glance, before he turns around and gulps down his drink, the other hand in his pocket. Still sulking then.

To my surprise, I found another vampire in the corner. The fact that he's in the corner wouldn't be so surprising if he didn't look like he's literally trying to melt himself into that corner. He's tall, with poorly cut hair, extremely skinny in his long dark clothes, and the darkest circles under his eyes I've ever seen. For some reason, he's muttering to himself while staring at me... it's a bit creepy.

"...That's Claude," whispers Richard.

Claude? The one who often lives here? My god, he looks like more of a ghost than a vampire...

"Don't mind him," sighs Lancelot theatrically. "Poor old Claude hasn't got all his head, he's the most harmless vampire you'll find, Darling."

While I'm still a bit disturbed by Claude's intense and void-like stare, one of the women on the couch suddenly laughs even louder than before. There are actually five female vampires seated, but two of them are visibly having the most fun. I recognize Agnes in the armchair, a new large book on her lap. She only raises her head for a second to glare at the duo, visibly annoyed. These two look the oldest among the women, and from their attitudes along with the other's, I would guess they actually are. One is blonde, with dark eyes with heavy eyelids and heart-shaped face, and wearing a very sexy long brown dress that shows off her cleavage. Anytime she speaks, I can hear a faint German accent despite her impeccable English. The other looks about the same age, in her late thirties or early forties, with thick shoulder-length indigo curls matching her dark blue lips, large silver hoops on her ears, and a sparkling silver top with leather pants. Probably another customer of Riki's... They are so busy laughing together they seem to have barely noticed me at all. On the other hand, the two younger women, who both look around my age, are both looking at me. One of them wears a short black dress similar to the one I wore yesterday, with a little cap, large boots, long hair in various shades of pink and a piercing on her lip. The other has a shyer demeanor, and an androgynous outfit. Big Boots girl suddenly stands up, and walks over, handing me a glass of red liquid. Daily Latest update

"Cecily," she introduces herself. "I'm coming to rescue you before Lancelot bores you with one of his stupid stories about his trips. So, you're Hera?"

"I am," I smile faintly, a bit awkward.

She gives me an intense stare, checking me from head to toe.

"You look better on the screen, as expected. The new technologies are impressive. I'm making a living just by being pretty, can you believe that? In fact, I already have more followers than you. Glory to the twenty-first century!"

She clinks our glasses without warning, and drinks hers, visibly proud. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to take that... Lancelot and Benedict roll their eyes and walk away immediately. Instead, the other young woman uses this opportunity to step in. She has no makeup and short black hair, but I find her the prettiest of all the women here.

"Sorry about Cecily," she whispers as if she wasn't right next to her. "She's arrogant but she isn't mean. I'm Felicia. Nice to meet you, Hera."

At least, they are making it easy to sort out who I'll probably get along with or not... Cecily shrugs, and simply walks back to the couch next to the other two. She fills her now empty cup with something out of the glass bottle that was on the coffee table, the same as the other ladies drinks. Felicia steps to my side, and I realize Richard is gone, nowhere to be seen in the room. He really is as fast and silent as a shadow...

"The two other ladies are Anna and Rebecca," says Felicia, with her soft voice. "Don't mind them, those two just love any occasion to catch up, as if they didn't call each other every week. They are a lot of fun, for anybody who can keep up with their antics."

"Noted... Is that... alcohol those two are drinking? It doesn't look like blood."

"Yes."

"I thought... Vampires can't get drunk."

"Not with the normal alcohol humans drink. But what those two are drinking... Let's just say you don't want to light a match in the room right now."

"Oh."