

Wine-Dark

Everything was done twenty minutes before Victor woke up. They even helped me sweep and wipe everything down! I was just closing the door when I saw a car pull up. I wasn't expecting anyone else.

I went outside and closed the door behind me. It was Ms. Helen and a man. She smiled and waved.

"Hey, Echo!" She called out. "I found Glen broke down on the road. Give her the code word, she knows me."

"The code word is wine-dark." Glen responded.

"My master isn't awake yet. I don't feel comfortable having you in the house until he is. Please have a seat on the bench, I will come for you once he's up for the day." I told them.

"No problem. You guys are cool. I'm not going to fuss." Helen nodded.

I turned around and went in, locking the door behind me and promptly setting the gates to close so no one else could show up unexpectedly. I unlocked and opened the dining room door and then the basement. After, I pulled out the snack tray and popped juice bottles in the freezer to chill.

Victor would be up soon, and I was guessing his friend would probably be up right around the same time. I wanted to make sure I was fully prepared for a strange vampire in the house. Not many women fed on me, but they weren't any nicer than the men. It worried me a little.

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"Good evening." A female voice said from behind me.

I managed not to jump and turned toward the voice. A young looking woman was standing in the dim arch of the dining room. She didn't look like she was going to come any closer.

She was about my height with pale skin, violet eyes like Victor, and long, blonde hair. Her clothes were covered in blood. It made me nervous, but Victor promised me that no one would hurt me. I trusted Victor.

"Are you Ms. Rosalynn?" I asked.

"Yes. The house is lovely. Victor told me everything was horrible." She smiled.

"I need it. Let me run up and get you something to change into. I would offer you a shower, but the donors have arrived and are waiting outside." I told her.

"Thank you, Echo. I'll wait here."

I ran up to my room and grabbed a pink sundress from my closet. It would work, she didn't have larger curves and wouldn't need underclothes. I wondered where her luggage was, or if she'd just banked on borrowing from me. I also grabbed a wash cloth so she could clean up in the bathroom downstairs.

When I returned, I let her know it was safe to go around in the house because the sun was blocked. Rosalynn was grateful and took the items to the bathroom. I went to the basement door and met Victor as he was coming up. He looked around at the lightness of the kitchen.

"There's no direct sunlight. The windows are covered with a white plastic that keeps it out. You can safely come out." I said.

"It's been a long time since I was out in a place as light as this."

"I thought you might like feeling a little more alive when you get up early. All of the rooms downstairs have this covering, all of the open areas upstairs do, too. Only the bedrooms are blacked out entirely." I explained.

Victor stepped out of the doorway to the basement. He smiled and looked around. The kitchen was much warmer looking since I added the decorations. The table was set with placemats and a pretty centerpiece I liked.

"Please head to the living room. The donors are here. Rosalynn is getting cleaned up a little. I'll let them in when you're both settled there."

"Thank you, Echo. I can't wait to see everything." Victor said and headed to the living room.

When Rosalynn came out of the bathroom, I sent her along and started her clothes soaking in cold water. Once that was done, I went to the front door and guided Helen and Glen to where the vampires were waiting.

"Wow, Echo! I'm impressed. Just two days ago this was so bad, Glen. Like really cheap stuff. I almost didn't believe you when you said it was temporary. It looks so nice now!" Helen raved.

I kept walking. Something about her annoyed me and I really didn't want to have to make conversation. I was exhausted and had no idea what to make for dinner. Maybe I'd just have a salad. Making decisions was difficult when I was this tired.

It was super hard not cooking from someone else's instruction. I should make a meal plan. Then I wouldn't have this problem. I shook my head. I needed to focus.

"Ms. Helen and Mr. Glen have arrived, master. Is there anything else I can do for you?" I asked.

"No, thank you, Echo. Go rest." Victor smiled softly.

I bowed and headed to the kitchen. He only took a few minutes to feed last time. I guessed it would be the same for her. If she got up this early, then she would have to be around the same age... right?

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Setting a four-minute timer, I went down to the basement and stripped the mattress there. I'd call haulers to take the two mattresses away later. I carried my bundle up to the laundry room and got them started in the large washing machine just as my timer went off.

After pulling the juices from the freezer and gathering up the tray, I went to the living room. Both vampires had finished their feedings and were stepping away from their donors. I'd timed it perfectly. I didn't want to see them having their meals.

I set the tray down and handed Helen a bottle of cranberry juice. She'd told me last time that she liked it. Glen looked happy and took an orange juice. Victor and Rosalynn left the room without saying anything.

"I think this is my new favorite client. Comfy furniture, polite vamps, and free snacks." Helen grinned as she sipped her juice and nibbled her food.

"I've been feeding vampires for three years and none of them were ever like this." Glen said.

"You said you used to be a donor, too, right, Echo?" Helen asked.

"Yes. I don't do that anymore." I smiled politely.

"Why don't you have any scars? Did you get them lasered off? I knew someone who did that once they quit." She said.

I didn't like the way she was digging and asking questions. Lying would serve me best. I needed her to drop it and leave.

"Yes. It was a fairly painful recovery, but I didn't have the scars anymore." I nodded.

"How old are you? You don't look old enough to donate at the Red Cross, let alone to vampires." She pressed.

"Twenty-two. I only did it for a year or so." I smiled as I lied.

"Wow. You got that baby face. You want to go out with us Friday? Me and Glen take that night off to party with our friends. You'll have fun." She insisted.

"I have dinner with my family on Fridays. Thank you for the offer. Are you about ready then?" I asked, standing.

"Yeah. I have one more client tonight. I can't normally pull doubles, but your boss doesn't take much." Helen chuckled.

"I'll walk you out." I offered and led them to the entry.

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Once they were gone, I leaned against the door and sighed. She tried to get me to go out with her last time, too. Since she was still feeling well after, she wanted to party. I didn't like her.

There was something about her that rubbed me the wrong way. Maybe it was her attitude. She didn't like me when she first came in, but then decided to be nice. I don't like when people change quickly like that.

I went back to the living room to clean up the mess, then to the kitchen to look over my options for dinner. Maybe just a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I really wanted to take a bath and go to bed. Victor wanted to do that test, though.

Walking to his room, I paused outside the door. I should check with him. If I set an alarm, I could nap on the couch while I wait for the laundry.

"But, do you really think that's the best idea?" Rosalynn asked.

"It's really the only option. She's talking about killing herself. If it looks like he might be the type to take her, I'll marry her." Victor answered.

Marry? I couldn't imagine. I didn't know what to think of that. It wasn't worse than death, I suppose. There had to be a better option.

"Fine. Let's do the test and see if it's even a concern. I'll take care of the paperwork if it is. She can't act like she's your servant if you do this. When she's around other vampires, she has to be your wife." Rosalynn warned.

"She will be. Echo is a wonderful actress. She only behaves like a servant around people she doesn't know. Otherwise, she's just normal." Victor said.

I tapped on the door. I didn't want to hear anymore. I just wanted to do the test and go to bed.