

An Acquisition and a Warning

"There she is. Echo, this is Victor. I realized we didn't socially introduce you two. Now, be good for him. I'll be in the living room with your mother." Dad said.

"Yes, sir." I replied softly and he closed the door.

I swallowed and looked up at the vampire. I was only 5'4" so he was much taller. He looked down at me and his lips tightened into a thin line.

"Were you crying?" He asked gently. "Don't be afraid, little one. I won't hurt you."

"Th-Thank you. Where would you like me for your feeding, sir?" I asked.

He sighed and took off his sunglasses. I hadn't realized until just then, that I was shaking. I hadn't been this afraid since the first time, when I was seven.

"You won't be feeding me. I ate earlier." He said.

"I'm s-sorry." I took a deep breath to calm my voice. "Did I do something wrong? Did you change your mind because of me? How can I fix it? Please." I begged.

"What will happen if I don't buy you?" He questioned.

The question chilled me. I worked to take control of the shaking that got worse once he asked. If it wasn't him, it would be some other vampire. At least this one was offering a lot. It had to be him. No one else would pay that much and my siblings needed it.

Mom always told me not to let the vampires know I had a sister and brother. She said it would be dangerous. They might decide to take Harmony or Val.

I couldn't imagine them having to deal with being fed on. I hated the idea of them scared and potentially hurt. This money would make sure they would never have to sell their blood.

"They'll be mad at me, lock me up, and keep taking offers until my birthday, I suppose. They'll sell me to the highest bidder, even if it's not as high as you offered. Your offer was really big." I replied, quietly.

"I need to make a phone call. Sit on the couch and stay quiet." He ordered.

I sat and waited. With luck, he'd take me and I could take care of my family one last time. If he didn't want me... I didn't like to think of which of my other clients made that seven hundred thousand offer. Some of them were really scary.

"Rosalynn. I have the girl. I need the Council to reimburse me two million. The parents are trying to sell her to me. If I don't buy, someone else will. No.... Probably.... I'll make her my daytime servant for now. I don't think she'll be safe anywhere else. She's almost as pale as I am and there are no scars on her or the mother.... I know.... I smelled it when she got close.... My thought exactly. See you Tuesday." He closed his eyes briefly as he hung up the phone.

"You're coming with me. I want you to go pack your things." He said turning to me.

"Yes, sir." I said standing. "But, if I go out without a bite mark, they'll know you didn't feed on me."

"I'll tell them I bit your thigh. They wouldn't see that at first glance. Don't be afraid anymore. I'm going to keep you safe. You'll have a lot more freedom and never have to feed anyone again if you don't want to." He smiled.

"Really? Never again?" I couldn't keep the relief from my voice.

"Really, never again. Now, go. I don't want to spend any more time here and we need to go over a few things before we get to my house." He nodded to the door.

I hurried out, past my parents, and into the kitchen to grab some grocery sacks for my things. I could be a servant. I already was one. Never feeding a vampire again. Being safe. That was what I really wanted.

I might not be able to see my sister and brother again, but I would know they were taken care of. I hoped it wasn't a trick to make me more eager to go with. But, he never bit me. Even though he was a vampire, I felt like I could trust him. It was enough to hope.

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Ten minutes later, I had my things packed and wrote a goodbye note in black marker on the back of my door. Harmony would probably see it on Monday after school. She would make a point of trying to see me as soon as she got home, right before she changed for her after school job. They never saw me on Sunday. I was always in bed by the time they go home on Saturday night.

I didn't tell her I was going with a vampire, just that I loved her and Val and I'd see them again someday. I didn't want her to worry about me too much, but I didn't want her searching for me. My master might be nice to me, but there was no telling what he would do if he found out about my siblings.

Rushing upstairs, I entered the living room, hoping I hadn't taken too long. My parents were grinning and shaking the vampire... my master's hand. I went and stood by him, waiting with my head down.

"Good. You follow instruction well. Mr. and Mrs. Gale. Your acceptance of that money was an agreement. This girl now belongs to me and you have no more claim on her. This portion of our meeting, however, is a warning. The Vampire Council is aware you were trading in child's blood. They are aware you were planning to sell your child. And they are aware that you have two others. If we catch scent of you doing anything like this again, you will be given a very final consequence. The same consequence your vampire clients have already suffered." He snarled.

My parents turned almost as pale as me. It was nice to see them afraid for once. They grasped each others' hands and nodded quickly.

"Come along, Echo. We have much to do." My master said and turned to the door.

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I wished I could've said something, but I wanted to leave as much as he did. I followed him out the door and to a car parked on the street. It was a pretty nice dark colored car. I don't know what type, I'm not into cars.

"Three grocery sacks." He scoffed. "Is that all you had?"

"Yes, sir." I replied.

"Call me Victor. Toss them in the backseat. You're riding in front with me. Do you have school on Monday?" He asked as we climbed in the car.

"No, Victor. I don't go to school. I had a homeschool certificate, but my mom took it and I haven't seen it since." I answered.

"I'll have Drew get you enrolled. We can fake some transcripts. I just need to have him give you an assessment so we can get you in the right classes. There's a community college here. I want you to think about what you'd like to study after high school. When you're not in school, you'll work for me. I have a lot of things around the house that need to be done. We'll be changing your name to Echo Nightshade. No vampire will harm you once you bear my name." Victor told me.

"I'd like you to consider staying on with me after you turn eighteen. You deserve to be taken care of. After what I learned you dealt with, there should be a time where you can enjoy yourself as a person. A human servant is generally free to live their lives as they want. They just have to see to their master's needs first." He said.

"Thank you. I'll think about it." I said and watched the scenery go past.

"Have you eaten? The person we had watching you said he almost never saw you eat." He said softly.

"I get to eat more on Saturdays." I responded. "You had someone watching me?"

"We had a report of someone selling the blood of a child. We investigated. I will be staying here indefinitely to ensure it doesn't happen again." He answered.

"So you knew about my sister and brother. My parents would never make them do that. I know they wouldn't. I was the one..." I stopped myself.

"The one what?" Victor asked.

"The one who was evil. They were the ones who were supposed to be. I was the one who stole from them." I told him.

It was like the whole car turned cold. In the window's reflection, I could see his hands gripping the wheel tightly. Mom always said the vampires liked me more because I was evil. He didn't seem to like it, though.

"Never say you're evil again." He said stily.

I nodded and we drove the rest of the way in silence. I was worried I'd made him mad. I really hoped I wouldn't be punished for it.