

## 1029

Giselle turned, wild-eyed, her face covered with blood. She yanked the blonde's gutted corpse from the ropes that held her ankles, and tossed her body to the crowd of lycanthropes as well. Her carcass met a similar fate.

Stronger now, Giselle turned to Deidra. She picked up the cloaked woman by her throat.

"Now -- you will explain to me why I was awakened!"

The red-robed giant lumbered forward to come to Deidra's aid. Without sparing him a glance, the vampire lashed out with her free arm and decapitated him. His head bounced off the platform, and was immediately fought over by three werewolves. His body sank to its knees, blood spurting from the thick stump of its neck, and then collapsed on the floor of the stagewww.W.NOVerlwoRm.coM

Shaggy, thickly-muscled arms dragged it off the platform and down to the ground.

"A-all will be e-explained in time, my M-mistress," Deidra wheezed in terror, her eyes bulging.

"Those who c-command me won't arrive until after sunset this coming night. They have an offer for you. For now, won't you t-take command of your army?"

"My 'army'?" Giselle released Deidra, who shakily stood massaging her throat. "Hah! This motley collection of mangy, flea-bitten curs? I have commanded legions of thousands of the undead!"

Van Helsing's earpiece crackled.

"Gabe, it's Vic. We're in position -- a mouse couldn't get out of there now."

"What the hell took so long?" Van Helsing hissed. "And where's Taggart? Two innocent girls were murdered while we were waiting for you!"

"I'm sorry -- couldn't be helped. Long story. We ran into some... resistance. I'll tell you later."

"How bad?"

"Four dead -- including Taggart."

Van Helsing closed his eyes. Then he loaded the stake into his crossbow. He turned to Tessa.

"Be careful!"

She smiled and fingered the 14-K cross charm she wore on a fine gold chain around her neck.

"Don't worry - I will. This is my good luck charm; you gave it to me."

Van Helsing nodded. Then he clicked his helmet's comm link. "Let's hit it!" he snapped. He sighted the crosshairs of his bow's scope on Giselle's chest, just to the left of center. He fired, and the stake shot away toward its target with a high-pitched "twang."

Giselle du Meliere saw it coming. She grabbed Deidra by the shoulders and planted the cloaked woman in front of her, using her as a shield. Van Helsing's missile pierced Deidra's back with a hollow 'thud' and protruded out between her breasts. Streams of crimson gushed from the wound and poured from her mouth.

"M-mis... t... tress?" she burbled, choking on her own blood.

And then all hell broke loose. Submachine guns opened fire, spewing silver bullets as Van Helsing's troops poured out of the woods. Grenades arced into the crowd of werewolves and exploded violently, flinging dozens of the beasts high into the air. Silver shrapnel flew everywhere. The mangled corpses that hit the ground were human.

Giant bat-like wings sprouted from Giselle's back, and she flung Deidra aside as she launched herself into the air. She landed feet first on Van Helsing and slammed him against the thick bole of a tree before he could aim his bow again. He cried out in pain and went down, his helmet tumbling off down the hillside. He was sitting slumped against the tree, helpless. Panic gripped him when he realized his arms and legs were useless; he had no feeling from the neck down. Giselle knelt in front of him and repeatedly smashed a fist into his face, driving his head back, slamming it against the tree trunk until he was teetering on the edge of unconsciousness.

"YOU!" she snarled. "How can you possibly still be alive in this time?"

"I... have connections," Van Helsing gasped as his blood ran in his eyeswww.W.NOVerlwoRm.coM

"You think you are amusing? I do not find you so."

The vampire backhanded him again and again, and his head snapped from side to side with the force of the teeth-rattling blows as his blood sprayed around the clearing. Tessa charged forward to help him, a sharpened stake in her hands. Just as she was about to plunge it into Giselle, the vampire slammed a locked arm palm-first into Tessa's face. The young woman was propelled violently backward and rolled down the hill, losing her helmet as well. She was abruptly stopped by a large gray boulder, and lay stunned, moaning in pain. Blood streamed from her broken nose and smashed mouth.

Giselle listened to the sound of machine gun fire and the howls of dying werewolves. She snarled. "Let's even the odds, shall we?" she said. She raised her hand over her headwww.W.NOVerlwoRm.coM

Tendrils of blood-red mist began to creep along the ground. Within moments, the woods were filled with the billowing scarlet fog. A half conscious Van Helsing could see little of the area beyond where the stunned Tessa lay just a few yards away. The chattering of the guns ceased, to be replaced by the confused voices of Van Helsing's troops.

Then suddenly, a fearsome roaring shattered the sudden calm, and the agonized screams of dying men and women joined the din. The werewolves were on the attack now; they could see in the fog, and the tide had turned. The humans were functionally blind. They were easy prey for the savage beasts.

Tessa stirred. She lurched drunkenly to her feet and shook her head. Giselle's smile was savage as she raised her right hand over her head like a claw, her eyes blazing like twin ruby lasers. "Come to me, little one," she crooned.

Tessa jerked upright, as if she was a marionette on strings. She stared fixedly ahead with a sleepwalker's stare.

"You are indeed beautiful, my little one," the vampire whispered. "Take off your clothes so that I may admire all of your beauty."

"Tessa -- don't!" Van Helsing cried. "Fight it!"

But Tessa was deeply in thrall to Giselle du Meliere. She peeled off her camouflage jumpsuit and wriggled out of her panties, then slipped off her bra. She even kicked off her shoes, but she didn't take off her socks. She had the body of an athlete. She was small breasted, lean and supple, like a runner. Her nipples were hard in the chill night air. She shivered, her lower lip quivering. Her smooth skin puckered into goosflesh.

Something gleamed on Tessa's neck. The cross charm.

Giselle hissed and whirled away from the young woman, throwing an arm in front of her eyes. "That charm!" the vampire snarled. "Remove it now and throw it away!"

Tessa obediently unclasped the necklace and tossed it aside, and then she willingly walked into Giselle's deadly embrace. Their naked bodies came together. Tessa gasped and moaned. "Y... you're so cold," she quavered.

"As you will soon be as well, little one," Giselle murmured. Woman and vampire kissed, and Tessa gagged. Giselle forced herself on her prey, and before too long Tessa began to respond, moaning and thrusting her hips in arousal. Giselle probed Tessa's sex, spreading open her lips with two fingers, and a stream of her juices spattered on the ground.

Suddenly, Giselle pulled away and sank her fangs into Tessa's tender throat. She sucked voraciously.

"Noooooo!" Van Helsing screamed, but there was nothing he could do.

With a prodigious effort, Giselle finally yanked herself away from the young woman's torn throat, gasping, her face smeared with blood. Tessa was turning blue; she was dying. The vampire took a sharp thumbnail and sliced a deep cut in her left breast, just above her nipple, so that blood flowed. She shoved Tessa's head down, and the woman feebly sucked like a baby nursing at her mother's teats. Giselle's blood streamed from the wound into Tessa's mouth as Van Helsing shrieked in impotent rage. Once Tessa had ingested Giselle's blood, she, too, would be doomed to forever walk the night as one of the undead. The vampire arched her back in an orgasm, and ran her tongue across her upper lip. Her own icewater juices ran down the insides of her legs.

"Yessssssss," she hissed. "Now you are.... hhhhhh... m ine, little one."

Tessa sagged forward like a rag doll into Giselle's arms. The vampire's fangs slashed again, and she finished draining her prey. She let Tessa's limp corpse slump to the ground; then she pushed the body with her foot so it tumbled down the slope. The vampire queen smiled triumphantly and returned her attention to the sobbing Van Helsing.

"She was your cunt, no, mon cherie?" she taunted. "Your lover? Now that she has been turned, you will have to share her with me. But we can have the ménage a trois, no?"

Van Helsing's tears mixed with the blood on his cheeks in a watery pink cascade. He spat in her face. "Go to hell, bitch!" he howled.

Giselle merely smiled. "I've already been there, mon cherie," she said, wiping the goblet of his saliva off her cheek. "Such delicious irony, no? The great Gabriel Van Helsing, vaunted vampire slayer and inestimable monster hunter, turned into a vampire by little Giselle du Meliere. You will die tonight, along with your troops, but this coming night you will rise again to be with me as my consort. Your troops, alas, will be reduced to werewolf dung."

Van Helsing could hear the screams of his soldiers growing less frequent now, as the triumphant howling of werewolves echoed through the trees. If he could kill her, the fog would lift. But how...

Giselle tore open his shirt front. "I promise you, mon cherie, that your death will be exquisite, pleasurable."

She kissed him, and Van Helsing nearly threw up from the taste of hundreds of years of death and corruption. She licked the blood off his face; her icy breasts pressed against his skin. Her body was as cold as the deepest winter day in January, and Van Helsing shuddered. Her tongue traced its way down his body, lapping off his blood. He could feel her clawlike fingernails tearing bloody grooves in his chest. He started.

He could feel her fingernailswww.W.NOVerlwoRm.coM

Van Helsing realized that sensation was returning to his legs, and that his arms now felt normal, although he was still numb from the waist down.

Suddenly, a werewolf roared in triumph nearby, and a woman screamed in consummate agony. There was a good deal of frenzied thrashing in the brush; then the distinct sound of chewing and crunching could be heard, and the woman's shrieks doubled in intensity.

She was being eaten alive!

The screaming abruptly stopped. The naked torso of a woman, its head and arms torn off, sailed into the mist-shrouded clearing. A lycanthrope dashed through the fog and grabbed the mangled prey in his jaws and fled with it, trailing the bloodstained remains behind, while another werewolf ran alongside in hot pursuit, ripping a breast from the belly, and a vicious, snarling tug of war began over the carcass.

Van Helsing desperately glanced over the ground, looking for a weapon. He had to find some way to defeat Giselle to save the remnants of his troops. His crossbow was still lying on the ground near his right hand - the hand that had dropped from his hand; his fingers brushed against its roughened wood.

Could he get to it? He stretched out his hand; his fingers brushed against its roughened wood.

Could he get to it? He clenched his hand, then his fingers closed around the wood, then he gripped it.

Surface. If he could only get a grip on it...