

My Friend the Vampire
(Prologue)

I don't know where inspiration comes from. Each time I finish a story, I think I have exhausted all topics. I stopped reading Steven King novels because it seems he ran out of new topics. I am sure his fans will disagree. Anne Rice, along with Steven King, are two of my favorite authors. Like King, Rice writes about bizarre stuff. I have read her series called the “Vampire Chronicles”. It doesn't matter what topic she writes about, her writing style is captivating.

I started a blog a while back, called “Wine Induced Short Stories”. I find this to be a real motivating factor in finding a new topic. The blog was not successful, I think because it required readers to sign up to their web site. I went to a new site and started my blog again.

The link is: wineinducedshortstories.blog/2025/

I am not trying to make money with these stories, I just would like to have more people read them and comment. What reason is there to write these, if no one reads them? I read them. Sometimes more than once, just to correct my grammatical errors and punctuation.

So today I thought I would write a story about vampires. There are a lot of misconceptions about vampires. Are they really afraid of crosses, garlic, the sun light? Which human attributes do they retain? What can kill them? I will answer these questions and more by asking my new found friend.

Antwan, the Vampire

My Friend the Vampire.
(Chapter 1).

How we met:

I had always wanted to visit Bourbon Street in New Orleans. The closest I ever got was New Orleans Square in Disneyland, CA. This is it. It looks really authentic.



Now it was time to do the real deal. Here is a photo during Marti Gras.





Seems that during Marti Gras, women like to remove their tops and display their breasts. Hey, I don't judge others. It's a free country. Patrons throw colored beads down to the throngs of spectators.

Hurricane Katrina had devastated New Orleans in 2005. Flood waters had breached a levee and came pouring into the city. Why was much of the city below sea level?

In the first half of the twentieth century, mechanical pumping technology enabled the draining and subdivisions of the city's back-of-town swamps. The reclamation of these soggy areas had an unexpected consequence: it made ground levels fall. This process, called subsidence, occurred through different mechanisms.

Picture of New Orleans under 10 feet of water



Fortunately, New Orleans Square was high enough to avoid destruction. This history reminds me of another city with similar problems. Seattle, Washington. The city was first built at a low elevation. During storms and high tides, ocean water would inundate the city. When flush toilets were first introduced to prosperous patrons who lived up in the higher hills, they experienced unexpected horrible plumbing problems. The toilet drains were made of wood. When the ocean water rose up, it would cause the drains to back up and their toilets would explode in a shower of pee and poo.

Several times fires destroyed the downtown area. The city officials decided to rebuild the city on higher ground. In fact, they just covered the old city buildings with dirt and built a new city on top. Later some entrepreneur decided to make a museum of sorts. He started a tour of what is now called, Seattle underground.

Picture of Seattle Underground.



You can see people walking on the street above you while looking through glass panes on the tour.

Author's note: My wife Lili and I did that tour. Complete buildings, like banks and department stores are still standing 15 feet below street level. A really interesting tour.

Picture of the street view from underground.



To continue:

I did not go during Marti Gras. Perhaps if I had, I would have been safer in the crowds instead of a lone naive tourist. I was walking along looking at the sights when I was approached by a young guy. Hey, what are you looking for? Really nothing special. Perhaps I might drop in on one of those jazz clubs and listen to some good music. He said, I am a local here and I know the best places. I can show you around if you like. Sounds good. So we did hit a couple clubs and downed some beers and bourbon. This guy seemed nice and didn't appear to be some gay guy hitting on me. I am not prone to that lifestyle. Eventually, he suggested that we go to a party. Lots of girls, dancing, and more drinking. Sounded good to me in the half drunken state I was in. We left the bar and started walking. We talked about mundane

things. Where do you live, how is it, etc? I did not notice the change in scenery. Before long, we were in a shady part of town. He said, the party is up here in this building. We walked up some stairs and came to a hallway. We approached a door. He said, before we go in, you should check your wallet. Make sure everything is safe. At this point I started to feel something was wrong. Suddenly the door opened up and two scary dudes came out, grabbed my wallet and took off. I opened the door and instead of a party room, I was standing on top of the building's roof.

Author's note:

Something very similar actually happened to me when I was 19 years old and spent a night in New York City. I was in the Navy and we had docked in New York Harbor. I was on liberty and dressed in civilian clothes. After the incident at the roof top hotel, I had lost all my money and traveler's checks. I got my traveler's check back, but did not tell the American Express office the true story. I just told them that the checks fell out of my back pocket when I was drinking in some bar. No more questions asked.

To continue:

I walked back down to the ground level. I hadn't really paid much attention to how I had got there. I started walking back to where downtown was, but unknowingly was walking in the wrong direction. I crossed the path of a couple of hard looking dudes drinking by a trashcan lit with a fire. Well, well, look who has wandered onto our turf. Being robbed was one thing, but now I was about to get beaten up or worse. These two probably thought I still had money on me. They backed me into a brick wall. I tried to resist and they started punching me. Suddenly, they disappeared. Or so it seemed to me. It was just a flash, but I think they were dragged into a back alley. Instead of them reappearing, an elegantly dressed man walked out. He quickly wiped what looked like some ketchup from his lips. He must have had a hamburger for dinner. He had the most piercing violet eyes and pale skin I had ever seen.

You shouldn't be out walking around in this part of the city. He had a strange accent. Tell me something that I don't already know. He just smiled at my audacity. He said, let me lead you back in the right direction. I figured either this guy is my savior or he intends to kill me. I had used up all the adrenaline in my body by then so I just accepted him at face value. We started walking in the opposite direction I had been going. What are you doing walking around in this part of the city dressed so fine? Aren't you in the same danger as me? He said, not quite. I am fully capable of taking care of anything that comes my way. Why did you decide to help me? He said, that is a good question. I am looking to hire a personal assistant. You just happened to be in the right place at the right time. Don't you already have an assistant? I imagine with your fine clothes that you are fairly well off. He said, that is true, but my former assistant died. The hairs on the back of my neck rose up. He said, don't misunderstand. I did not kill him, he just died of old age. So I am looking for a replacement. He could feel and see the relief in my body.

So what would this assistant's duties entail? He said, I have some special needs that I can't always take care of myself. It is handy to have a mortal by my side. Did he really say mortal? I sense your confusion. In fact I can read your mind. Oh really, what am I thinking now? You are thinking that I am perhaps a lunatic and that your fate has gone from bad to worse. That was indeed what I was thinking. How did he do that? So how did you get this mind reading gift? Oh, all us Vampires have it. Did he really say that too? Now you are amused thinking that I am pulling your leg. Let me demonstrate. He grabbed me by my collar and lifted me three feet off of the ground. Then he put me back down and disappeared from view. Then he was suddenly back. We have acute hearing, laser focused vision, and can move with lightening speed. Faster than a locomotive, like your Superman use to say.

My head was spinning, but I had lost all fear. It had been replaced with a

kind of wonder. I have heard that you are all blood drinkers. Why aren't you killing me? He said, I have learned to curb my desires. At times it helps me avoid uncomfortable situation. Don't get me wrong. I do enjoy a feast now and then, but I only target those deserving of death. Besides, I have use for you if you agree to work for me. If I refuse your employment offer, will you kill me then? He said, no, I will not. No one will believe you if you tell them what you have witnessed. Especially with the smell of the alcohol you have consumed recently. Can I spend some time thinking about it? Yes, take as much time as you need. If you decide not to work for me, I will already know it and you will never see me again.

What is your name? My name is Antwan. My name is- I already know your name, it is Louis. Pronounced: (Lewwis in French)

My Friend the Vampire.
(Chapter 2).

I thought long and hard about Antwan's offer. Other than him being a vampire, there was something unique about him. I liked his style. How would my life be having him around me? No punks would ever steal my money or beat me up. I imagined that he was extremely rich. I would benefit from being his servant, traveling the world, eating in the best restaurants, dating the most beautiful women. That last one won me over. My past romantic adventures had all turned out to be a bust. There was still some reluctance on my part. Maybe I could ask for a trial period. Yes, that would be a good idea. If I found that this was not to my liking, I could walk away. Would he let me? He said he would. So, I was not too surprised when he showed up at my table in one of the finest restaurants in New Orleans.

I would like to accept your offer with one stipulation. Could I try it for 3 months, and if I don't like it, could I back out? He said, absolutely. I ordered steamed lobster, asparagus salad, and a souffle for dessert. I had never had a souffle and I didn't even know what it looked like or tasted like. I just liked the sound of it. It turned out to be kind of a soft brown cake with

ice cream on the side. I really liked it.

Picture of souffle



Antwan ordered a seafood gumbel with extra garlic. I thought your kind was allergic to garlic. He said, I am glad you were discreet enough to not mention what my kind really is. Actually, I really like garlic. It is one of the few things I can taste. Most foods are bland and taste like paste. The waiter produced a bottle of what I thought was wine. It turned out to be from Antwan's private reserve—no doubt some blood concoction mixed with wine.

I have lots of questions, but this is not the place to ask. Is there somewhere we can go after dinner? He said, Since you have accepted my employment offer, I will bring you to my humble abode. Did he mean lair?

While sitting there, a beautiful lady approached our table. She said, Antwan, I see you have a new friend. Can you introduce me? He said, sure this is Louis. You will be seeing a lot of him around since he has accepted my offer for employment as my new personal assistant. This is Charlotte. She mentioned the name Ramon. I was sorry to hear about Ramon, my condolences. I know he was a longtime friend of yours. He replied, yes he was with me for over 50 years. Thank you for your kindness. She walked away, but not before I took in her elegant departure.

I asked if she is another of his kind. No, just one of many of my female friends, he explained. More questions came to mind. Our dinner was very pleasant and as we walked along the French quarter, I was feeling lightheaded, euphoric even. Maybe I should have been anxious about seeing his lair, as I imagined it was called. This brought a smile to his lips. I could see he was still reading my thoughts. Are you always going to invade my privacy? Once I feel safe and secure about your loyalty your private thoughts will be your own.

After dinner, we rode a ways in a horse drawn carriage. One of those ones offered to the tourists. It seemed too convenient that it happened to arrive just as we departed the restaurant. No taxi for you? I asked. This is another of my friends, he told me. I had helped him out of a complicated situation once and this is his way to repay me.

We arrived at a mansion-style building in an old upscale residential area of New Orleans. It was surrounded by a steel fence with a security gate. I didn't see him punch in any code. Instead the gate opened upon our arrival.

As we entered, I noticed that even the foyer was decked out in opulent mahogany panels. This led to the living room that had a grand staircase to the upper floors. He said, first let me show you where I sleep. We took some stone steps down to a cellar. This is where I expected to see his coffin. We approached a steel door that had a security lock that would have looked more normal on a bank vault. Again, the door magically opened. No code required. I imagined that he used some kind of mental combo to unlock it. He said, I will only let you see this once. No one is ever allowed in here. Inside was a satin and velvet-covered bed. Very stylish décor filled the room. Inside was what looked like a wine fridge, a desk with a computer on it, and a TV hung on the wall. Where is your coffin? He smiled. Another miss-conception about us. Why would I choose to sleep in a hard wooden box when I have this ultra soft bed to rest in? I may have been called the undead, but coffins scare me. In the past, I didn't have the advantage of modern conveniences. I was always at risk of being discovered, attacked, or burnt to death. Yes, we can be killed by fire. It takes a while and it is very painful. The 'vault', as I like to call it, is fire-proof, water-proof, burglar-proof, and can only be opened by my own unique brain waves. I need to sleep during the daylight hours. I can remain up, but after two or three days, I am exhausted and need to sleep. I don't like to let myself get into that condition. So one of your duties is to watch my door. There is an emergency button on the side of the vault. If you press it, I will get an alert that something is amiss. Unless my building is on fire, the Mississippi rises up, or someone is trying to gain entry to my building, you must never disturb me. Got it? Yes, I got it. You are welcome to wander anywhere throughout the mansion, but you are never to leave me alone. The fridge is stocked with delicatessen treats

and the mini fridge has some alcohol. If I ever find you too drunk to function adequately, I will fire you. So let's retreat to the parlor. A parlor is a classic term for formal living rooms, which are historically sitting rooms, featuring fine furniture towards the front of the home. Parlors were originally designed as a space to receive and entertain guests.

Antwan's Parlor



Now I asked my questions.

I heard that if you stay out in the sunlight, it will kill you. Not true. sunlight does not kill us, but if exposed too long, we go blind. It happened to me 400 years ago. It took 50 years for my retinas to grow back. Can you imagine the horror of a blind vampire? If it wasn't for my sister, I would have perished. You have a sister? Yes, she and I were converted at the same time. Someday I will tell you that story.

I will tell you why sunlight is so bad. Our eyes are super sensitive. Even reflected light hurts my eyes. I can take it, but I don't want to if it can be avoided. The sun also burns my white skin. It takes months for the 'tan' to fade.

Forget the rumor that I cringe if I go by a church or someone displays a cross. Another false rumor. I love the architecture of the old churches and have visited many. Let me show you my collection of crosses.

Here are two of my favorites. I am partial to the turquoise. Crosses displayed here.



I noticed that beautiful woman who you introduced to me as Charlotte. Do you have girlfriends? Yes, I do have girlfriends and lovers. That gorgeous lady that greeted you in the restaurant is just a friend though. At times I have had both mortal and vampire girlfriends. I don't reveal that I am a vampire to mortals. I tell them that I am a history professor. I have a skin affliction that prevents me from moving in daylight. They enjoy my stories. I have lived during the time of many famous people.

He continued, you want to know how I get money? That is easy. In the past, I was hell on wheels. I ransacked castles, stole king's ransoms, and sold drugs. I amassed a fortune. This brought me unwanted attention. I was pursued, hunted, chased by angry mobs, kind of like Frankenstein's monster chased by the angry villagers with torches. I could easily rob any bank. This would once again bring unwanted attention. I have since learned of an easier and safer way. I invest in property. I have a dozen or more safe houses scattered throughout the world. That way, I can live in France, China, India, anywhere I want without fear.

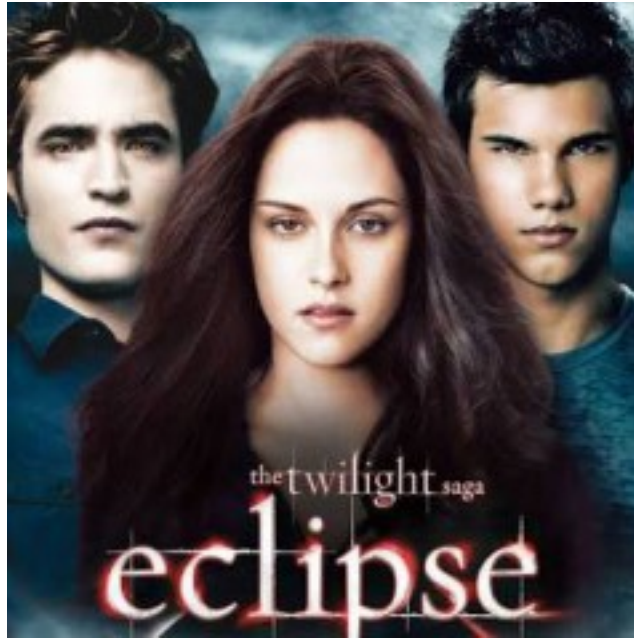
Another myth. You cannot kill us with a wooden stake to the heart. I do love Bela Lugosi though. He was my favorite vampire actor. Here is a picture of him.



“Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt both did an admirable job in Anne Rice's ‘Interview with a Vampire’. The accuracy of the movie was uncanny.”

I also like the three part Vampire and Werewolf series called “The Twilight Saga”.

Here is a movie poster from that movie.



By the way, there are no werewolves. That is all fantasy. I find this statement humorous, talking to a vampire.

This last revelation brought a smile to his lips. I guess he is still reading my thoughts.

I need to retire to my safe room. Sorry to cut you short. Here are a couple more details.

I am not the miserable soul as portrayed in movies. I really enjoy my life.

I no longer kill indiscriminately. I usually dine on a cocktail mixture of wine and animal blood. When I do kill, it is someone who deserves to die. Like those two scumbags who attacked you. There are many of those kinds around.

I am at least 1000 years old. I am really not sure of the exact age. I was about 27 when I became a vampire.”

See you tomorrow evening Louis. I hope I have not scare you off.

My Friend the Vampire.
(Chapter 3).

About 5 PM the next day, Antwan reappeared. He said, did you have a pleasant day? Yes I did, but I am a little jet lagged even though I didn't take a jet. He said, I'm glad to see you are not in a drunken stupor. I haven't switched over to this nightly schedule yet, but I am taking this job seriously. Don't worry, I will give you time to adjust. Still, I need you to begin your training. First of all, I don't want you to be beaten up or killed by those unsavory types like you met yesterday. I plan on investing a lot of time in you and I don't want it to be wasted because you are too vulnerable. I can't always come to your rescue. You need to start defensive combat training. Even though you are young, your muscles are flabby and you have no endurance. There may be times when I need your help instead of your helplessness. If you investigated all areas of this mansion, you would have surely come across the weight training gym. I want you to put in at least 2 hours early evening conditioning yourself. Running, lifting, all kinds of muscle toning exercises. That is something you must do often to keep in shape. I think it will take at least a month for you to reach a reasonable fitness level. I will spend at least half hour each day teaching you self-defense. I know you were expecting to start living a life of luxury, not boot camp. Your time will come, believe me. These are necessary steps, if you are to remain with me for long.

One month later

OK, it is time for a field test. You will see. I need to evaluate how much

improvement you have done with your self-defense training. We are going back to the same area where I first found you. But first, we have to go shopping. Your attire is too common looking. You need to appear more prosperous, if we are going to lure the right type of assailants. So here we really were. Back in the unsavory part of back streets New Orleans. Antwan was shadowing me. Meaning, he was not seen. At least I knew he would have my back. As I walked through the alley ways, I put on my drunken stupor act.

Dressed in my new duds, I did indeed look damper and rich. It didn't take long for a couple of lowlifes to approach. As they came closer, I was surprised to see my old friend who had wanted to show me a good time at the so-called party.

He said, well, well. Look who has gotten lost again. He had lost his friendly demeanor. Looks like you want to give me more of your money. Please don't hurt me, I pleaded. As they came within striking distance, I placed a well aimed kick at the first ones mid-section. Crunch, I heard his ribs crack. He went down in agony. The look on the other guys face was priceless. I thought this was easier than I expected. Then another guy came out of the side alley. No worry, I am sure Antwan has my back. So both of them attacked me. I defended myself as Antwan had taught me. In the past, I would have been done in by now. I kept up the fight and my endurance was holding up. The other two were slowing down and getting tired. Where was Antwan? This had to stop. I side stepped a punch and did a leg sweep to take down one of them. He collapsed to the ground. One on one for a the moment was enough for me to finish off this guy. He grabbed his buddy, who could barely stand, and started to leave. I advanced and kicked him hard in the rear. He went sprawling down on the pavement. I bent over and extracted his wallet. How does it feel to get robbed? Then I turned and walked away.

That was when I saw Antwan. He applauded me on my victory. Why didn't

you help me? I thought you needed the confidence to realize that you can protect yourself. I told you before, I can't always be watching you. This was a valuable lesson. You deserve a treat. Lets go back to the mansion. Let you clean up and change clothes. I can see you got a little dirty being ruffed up back there.

We returned to the same restaurant where I had accepted his offer. Apparently, this was one of his favorites. And why not? They kept his private reserve ready for him.

I was riding high. I had successfully defended myself against three thugs. Now let's see, what other delicacies can I order that I have never tried before.

I asked the waiter to bring me foie gras.

Foie gras is the fattened liver of a duck (or goose) and is considered a great delicacy around the world. Made famous in France, foie gras is a traditional food known to mankind since at least Ancient Egypt.

Why is foie gras controversial?

Foie gras has been banned in over a dozen countries. Force-feeding damages the livers of the birds so badly it induces an extremely painful disease known as hepatic lipidosis. Scientific studies also show that consumption of foie gras is associated with a fatal disease in humans called secondary amyloidosis.

Save me the surmon. I was tired of eating hamburgers. (Not really) Just for this chapter.

Picture of foie gras



Just as before, a young woman approached our table. Instead of a greeting and asking to sit down, she said nothing and just sat down. Antwan said, Lewis, this is Charlene. Charlene, Lewis. Pleasure to meet you Lewis. She is perhaps the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. She had amber colored skin and I guessed she was of mixed race. The most hypnotic eyes, even more so than Antwan's. She said, Antwan has been telling me about you. I thought it was time to meet. Her beauty was such that I was almost speechless. I finally regained my composure. The pleasure is all mine. The next 1/2 hour was spent mesmerized by her. Antwan could see that I was smitten. He just smiled. I assumed that she was one of his mortal girlfriends. Too bad, I would have liked to spend time with her alone.

Charlene



Back at the mansion, I had to ask Antwan. Is Charlene your girlfriend? He said no she is not. He didn't elaborate. I couldn't fathom why she was not. It would be months later before I understood why.

In the mean time, Antwan told me it was time to expand my duties. Up until now, I had only been his day time bodyguard, or door man, if I wanted to be truthful.

My conditioning and training would continue all during the time I spent with him. Except for his first appearance in the alley last month, I had not seen or heard any evidence that he was truly a Vampire. That was about to change.

My Friend the Vampire.
(Chapter 4).

Antwan told me it was time for him to hunt. He said, he can go for several weeks on animal blood, but then his thirst becomes too great. He needs human blood. Also, he explained it to me this way. He can easily feast on the human scum that wander around the wharf and back alleys, but just like

the difference between Ruth Chris's mouth watering tenderloin and Sizzlers grizzly greasy shoe leather, human blood has its high and low quality. Those lowlifes poison their blood with alcohol and drugs. You are what you eat. In his case, you are what you drink. So on occasion he ventures out to the highest levels of New Orleans society looking for the perfect meal. My job is to clean up any messes that might come about after these encounters.

My first excursion turned out to be a real doozy. We had gone to a restaurant that was one of Antwan's favorites. He had already scoped out a possible victim. This fellow frequented this establishment routinely. He always demanded his favorite table. Antwan and I arrived ahead of him and he requested the very same table. The proprietor knew better than to deny Antwan his request. His reputation preceded him. The man's name was Prescott. When he arrived, he went up to our table and informed Antwan that this table was reserved. Antwan answered. I know it is reserved, I reserved it myself. The guy said, you don't know who you are talking too. I have many friends in the French Quarter and if you don't move you will regret it. Antwan answered, I rarely regret any of my actions. Antwan then turned his back on Prescott. Prescott's face glowed an indignant red. He huffed his way back to the only open table left. Not a desirable spot. During our meal, Prescott continued to fume. He was even rude to the waiter and made a crude remark to the maid cleaning the table next to him. Antwan already knew of this guy's arrogance. He thought his money and prestige allowed him to get away with just about anything.

We ate our meal in peace and waited for Prescott to leave first. I sensed what was to come about. He had entered with a heavy set man who had surveyed the room and left. I imagine that this guy was his bodyguard.

When we walked out, sure enough, there was Prescott with his friend. I told you that you would regret your actions this evening. I stepped in between Antwan and the bodyguard. Prescott didn't realize what had happened.

Before I knew it, Antwan and Prescott had disappeared. The bodyguard stepped around me and wondered where Prescott had gone. I think you should mind your own business and just go home. No one talks to me like that, especially a prissy fellow like you. As he turned around, I anticipated his next move. I ducked and punched him in his big belly. The air went out of him as he doubled over. I landed an uppercut that Mike Tyson would have been proud of. As he crumbled to the ground, I caught sight of Prescott. Antwan had had his feast and dumped Prescott's body into the river. Then he walked away and left me standing there alone. I called the police. My report told of the whole incident.

The next day's paper had reported the details. I read it to Antwan the next evening.

Prescott's bodyguard had said he hadn't seen what had happened. He failed to mention that a thin young guy clobbered him and left him helpless on the ground. So I was the only eye witness to the tragic event. This was my story. Prescott had gone after a stranger with a bottle of wine. Presumably to crush his skull. I did not know the reason for his fury. I only noticed that Mr. Prescott looked very angry and was visibly drunk. He had slipped on the wet pavement, dropped the wine bottle, and cut his throat as he fell on it. He then stood up and toppled over the river bank. The stranger ran away completely oblivious of Prescott's actions. I described the stranger as a short chubby guy with a dark complexion. He was perhaps a mulatto. A person of mixed race like black and French.

They retrieved the body from the river. The coroner verified that Prescott did indeed bleed profusely, and then he drowned.

You did well Louis. You saved me from having to move out of New Orleans. What do you mean? Without your convincing story, the police might think that there was a serial killer loose in the city. It would scare off

the patrons and businesses would suffer. The city doesn't want that, and neither do the police. They accepted your version of the story without suspicion. You killed those two guys in the alley last month. That was different. No one cares about those two. They just assumed that they got into a turf war. I sliced their throats with a knife and didn't suck out all of their blood out. Just enough to satisfy my moment's thirst. A prominent businessman like Prescott being killed would require an extensive investigation. Something that I try to avoid. How was Prescott? Divine, just like the fatten cow he was.

That evening, Charlene showed up at the mansion with a friend. She introduced her as Simone. I wasn't sure if she had brought her for me or Antwan. My question was answered when Antwan took her by the hand and ascended the spiral staircase to the upper bedrooms. Louis, you have the night off. Treat Charlene's safety as you would my own. Yes, boss. Don't call me boss. OK boss. I still had the audacity that I had shown on our first encounter. Antwan, just smiled. Perhaps I should caution myself against agitating him. Charlene smiled too. Apparently she approved of my attitude.

Lets get out of here Louis. This place bores me sometimes. Where do you want to go? I have a few favorite places that I frequent. I will let you escort me. She grabbed my hand and led me out. At that moment, she could have led me anywhere. She had me at hello, as Tom Cruise said in some movie.

First we went to a fancy dining place. I was still on my quest to try new foods. I ordered truffles for dessert. Charlene smiled. You have never had truffles before have you? No, why? You will see when they bring your desert. Trying to regain some air of sophistication, I also ordered pheasant under glass.



I hoped my disappointment didn't show when they brought what looked like a small piece of chicken under a large glass wine tumbler.

Charlene ordered a light salad. She said she was watching her weight. I had been watching her weight too, but not anything to do with diet. There wasn't an ounce of fat anywhere to be seen.

So we had a pleasant meal. First engaged in small talk. Then I was emboldened by the wine I drank. Do you have a boyfriend? Not at the moment. I don't seem to hold on to them very long. Later I would find out why. So getting that out of the way I intended to pursue her.

I still hadn't figured out her role in all this. I was wondering how you knew Antwan. I think I figured it out. You obviously have a special relationship with him and it's not romantic. I never witnessed a spark of jealousy between the two of them.

He had mentioned that he had a sister, but you are dark and he is light, so I ruled that out. The only conclusion I came to is that you are Ramon's daughter. He was Antwan's assistant for over 50 years. When he passed away, he asked Antwan to look after you. You figured all of that out on your

own. You clever boy. I can see why Antwan chose you.

We left it at that. So they brought my dessert. Now I knew what Charlene had meant. Truffles are just a bunch of fungus. Mushrooms to be precise. Not the dessert I had thought it to be. I was expecting something more like souffle.



I told her that I was embarrassed. She said, don't be my dear boy. I find your nativity charming.

After dinner, Charlene took me to a nightclub where they had great music. We even danced a couple times.

Over the next few months, Charlene and I would have many dates, as I like to think of them. She appeared to truly like me and she often said so. I was in heaven.

My Friend the Vampire.
(Chapter 5).

Charlene and I continued our dating. I knew she liked me, but how much I didn't know. I wanted to move our relationship to the next level, but didn't want to ruin it by pushing it. I needed some advice from Antwan.

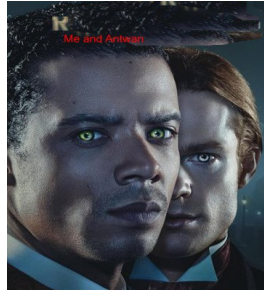
One time in the mansion, I witnessed Antwan and Charlene in a heated discussion. When I showed up, they abruptly quit. Not sure what they were discussing, but I surmised I was somehow the topic.

My three month probationary period had come and gone. Neither of us even mentioned it. I was too enthralled with Charlene to think about changing anything. I had accompanied Antwan on several other hunts. Some were easy, others I had to cover for him. He seemed pleased with my progress and talents.

One particular evening, Antwan and I were alone. I want to ask you for a favor. Go ahead. I am not sure how much Charlene likes me and I want to find out. What is it that you want me to do? Next time we are together, could you read her mind and let me know her true thoughts?

Can't do that. Why not? There are two reasons. First, it would be unethical for me to invade her private thoughts about you. You do that to me, why not her? I have stopped reading your thoughts and my initial reason was to gauge your allegiance. You have surpassed any suspicions and you have my full trust. The second reason is that I can't read her thoughts.

At first I didn't know what he meant. Then it dawned on me. Is she a vampire? Not only is she a vampire, she is my sister. How can that be? You are light, she is dark. Did you have different parents? No. Wait here. He got up and entered his vault. When he came back out I looked on in shock. He had the same dark complexion as Charlene. How can this be? It is merely a result of my vanity. I put on makeup to give me that pale looking skin. It makes me feel better and has the added effect of disguising my true look. I long for the time when my skin returns to its original color. It may take several more years.



Antwan's Real Look.

Charlene and I both got burnt in a past encounter with enemy vampires. Why didn't you go blind? We were wearing special glasses that I had made. The kind that you use to view a total eclipse of the Sun. That saved our eyesight.

Why doesn't Charlene apply the same makeup? She has an easier time satisfying her blood thirst. She just lures men back to her place. Who wouldn't go with her? I can see your point. Charlene doesn't usually keep boyfriends very long. After a very short romantic period, they become her next feast. You are the first one she has been interested in for real.

She is known in some circles as the “Black Widow”. Although, she has never married anyone. I admonished her and told her that you were off limits. You may have witnessed our argument last week.

Later Charlene returned to the mansion. Don't know where she had been. I saw the expression on her face though. She said, I guess Antwan told you the whole story. Apparently, she also could read my mind. She grabbed me by the hand as we headed up upstairs toward one of the bedrooms. She saw the worried look on my face. Don't worry, if I bite you, it will just be a love bite. No blood loss involved. So that is how I ended up with a vampire girlfriend and lover. We spent more time together after that. No more need to hide my true feelings. I did ask her to respect my privacy though. She said that was a fair request. I will turn off my mind reading abilities when we are together. In fact, I like it better when you remain a mystery. You always surprise me with actions I don't expect. The fact that you are a vampire and are more

powerful than me, I feel somewhat useless. When we go out, you no longer need me to protect you. OK, how about this. I will restrain myself and let you do all the fighting and protecting. Works for me. Besides, it wasn't your protective services that attracted me to you, it was your innocence and nativity. Your handsome physic is just a plus.

Now I was living the life I had envisioned. Fine clothing, fine dining, and luxurious accommodations living with the girl of my dreams. Hoping that one day my dreams will not turn into nightmares. My duties had become routine. I always knew how to fix things after Antwan's high society feasting. I could tell he was pleased with me. Life went on like this for a few more months. One early morning before the sunrise, Antwan bid us goodnight and entered his vault. We had been entertaining one of Charlene's friends. She was about to leave and Charlene and I were about to retire. Charlene had her own vault in her own place, but she often spent the day with me in my darkened bedroom. I happened to glance out the window. Three dark figures had jumped the perimeter fence. Before I could alert anyone, they had broken into the mansion. They caught Charlene's friend and immediately tore into her neck. Then they advanced on Charlene. She was formidable in her own right, but three against one was bad odds. Not thinking straight, I jumped to her aid. One of the vampires grabbed me by the neck and hurled me across the room. I hit the wall hard and my lights went momentarily out. They resumed their attack on Charlene. As some of my senses returned, I tried to stand up. I couldn't. I got up far enough to hit the emergency alarm button on Antwan's vault. When he emerged, all hell broke loose. I had never seen such fury. These three were fledglings, meaning that they had recently been converted. Antwan was more than one thousand years old as was Charlene. Years add power. It didn't take long to rip apart the intruders. Charlene was not injured in the attack. I could not say the same thing about me. I was seriously injured. Charlene had picked me up from the floor. I had slumped back down and could not move again. She carried me upstairs to my bedroom. I need to get to a hospital.

No hospitals. We have our own doctors. Better than any else. Whatever you say. What possessed you to try and fight those vampires? Any one of them are 100 times stronger than you are. Seeing you in danger is what possessed me. I never got over the need to protect you. Charlene said, I am highly impressed with your valiant stupidity. I will make it up to you. How? You will have to wait and see.

A doctor did visit me. I had two broken ribs and a broken arm. My leg was injured too but no bones broken. Other than being in extreme pain, I was not in any immediate danger of dying. A couple months of bed rest and I will be good as new.

Antwan and Charlene were in a whispered discussion. Antwan said, I can't have you laid up here for several months. We need to move to a new location. Word must have gotten out about our whereabouts. It is not safe here in Or'leans at this time. I noticed that long time residents often refer to here as Or'leans. Just like people on the west coast call Los Angeles, LA. Here they would think we were talking about Louisiana.

Authors note:

One time I was in a bar in St. Petersburg, Florida. Someone asked me where I was from. I told them the west coast. They said, St. Petersburg is the west coast. True, the west coast of Florida. I said the big west coast. LA

To continue:

I am not fit to be moved or to travel. You will be in a few days. I then saw Antwan cut his wrist and drip blood into a glass. He then poured in some of my bottle of Cabernet. Here drink this. Will this make me a vampire? Both Antwan and Charlene broke out in laughter. No chance. Do you want to be a vampire? Not at the moment. Trust me, this will aid in your recovery. Our blood has amazing healing powers. That is why when we are injured, our

bodies repair themselves. We have found that this also works on mortals. Where are we going? To Transylvania, Romania via Bucharest. You have got to be kidding? Why there? We have a coven there. I need to consult with some of my kind. There shouldn't have been fledglings running wild in New Orleans. Something is amiss. **Dracula's Castle**

My Friend the Vampire.

(Chapter 6).

Three days after my encounter with the three rogue Vampires, I was up and about ready to travel. Vampire blood is truly a remarkable healer. We flew from New Orleans to Budapest first class for \$5000 each. We had to make 2 stops. Of course both Antwan and Charlene had their own vaults there. Transylvania was a 4 hour ride from Budapest. Antwan was going to visit his clan alone, if you want to call them that. Charlene and I were free to do some sightseeing. She had seen it all before, but I was like a kid visiting the circus for the first time. My enthusiasm rubbed off on her and she was excited too. She even let me sleep with her in her vault. Something Antwan would never allow. She knew my affection for her was genuine and I was no danger to her. Besides, what could I do even if I wanted to harm her. The first thing we did was a night cruise along the Danube. The Danube is the longest river in Romania. Truly spectacular views.

Picture of Cruise along the Danube



The nightlife in Budapest is simply the best in the world. Goes on all night long. Szimpla Kert is the center of the ruin bars. These are old building and factories left over from World War II and converted into restaurants and bars.

Picture of Szimpla Kert



Picture of Fogas Haz (The most famous one).



We visited the Szechenyi Baths.

Picture of Szechenyi Baths



These Artesian well baths were so relaxing. Charlene knew which ones stayed open late evening.

Ah! and the food. Most people only think of Hungarian goulash. Here are some local specialties that I tried. I let Charlene chose for me. She even liked some of these dishes because they have a strong flavor she can taste.

Picture of Piftie (Aspic with Beef/Pork and Eggs)



Aspic or meat jelly is a savory gelatin made with a meat stock or broth, set in a mold to encase other ingredients. These often include pieces of meat, seafood, vegetable, or eggs.

Picture of Ardei Umpluti (Stuffed Bell Pepper)



(My grandmother used to make stuff like this. A Polish dish too)

Picture of Ciorbă de Perisoare (Meatball Sour Soup)



Not to be left out. Hungarian goulash is popular all over Europe. It is a typical European mix of potatoes, carrots, various types of meat in a tomato based stew. I particular like this one made with dumplings.

Two pictures of hungarian goulash

Author's note: (I have made this dish myself)

Here is another one with mashed potatoes.



Three days of relaxation and food erased our fatigue from jet-lag. We went with Antwan to Transylvania just to tour. He needed to meet with the elders alone. I wanted to see Dracula's castle.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the iconic 1897 tale of a vampire from Transylvania, is often thought to be inspired by a formidable 15th-century governor from present-day Romania named Vlad the Impaler.

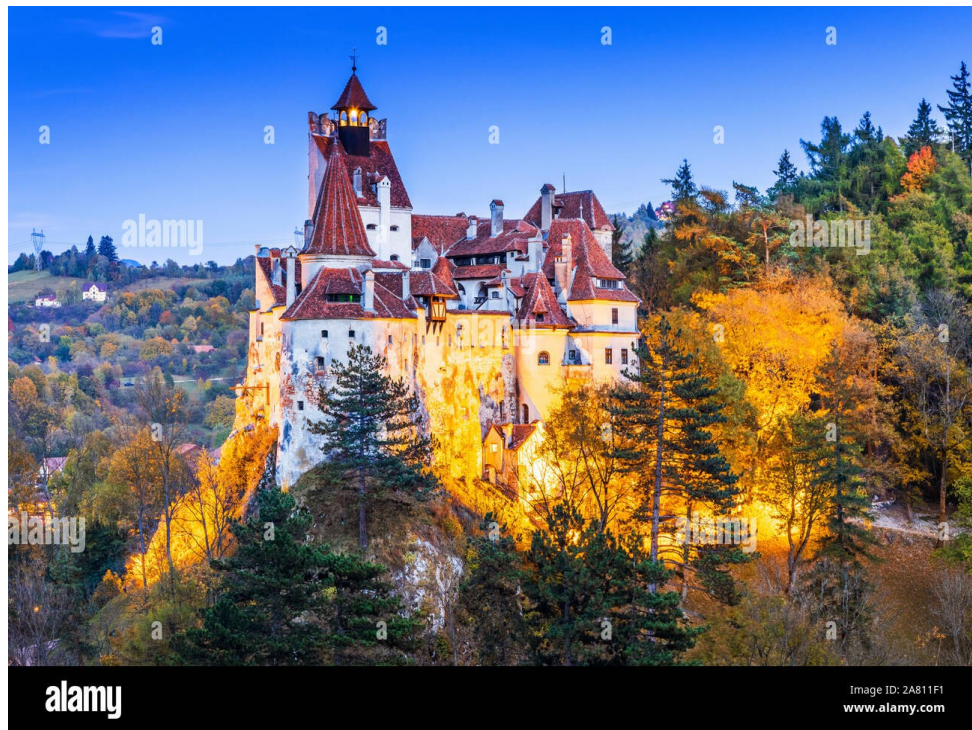
Vlad the Impaler – or, to give him his full title, Vlad III, Son of the Dragon. In the 1400s, Vlad was a ruler of modern-day Transylvania and a man with a tremendous appetite for cruelty. His blood-thirst acted as inspiration for Bram Stoker's vampire named Dracula, in the novel written 450 years later.

Bram Stoker didn't specify that Bran was the castle he wrote about in his 1897 novel *Dracula*. However, due to his description of the castle, its location, and the strange stories about its former blood-thirsty inhabitant Vlad the Impaler, Bran Castle is widely accepted as the home of the notorious vampire Count Dracula.



Two Pictures of Bran Castle

Bram Stoker never set foot in Transylvania. But his creation of the Dracula character and description of the castle led scholars to believe this was it.



We took the inside tour. Charlene felt completely at home. I had chills all up and down my spine. If I had been directing the tour, I would have had Charlene give a demonstration of a real Vampire feast. I would have asked for volunteers though.

Vlad the Impaler's Grave at the right



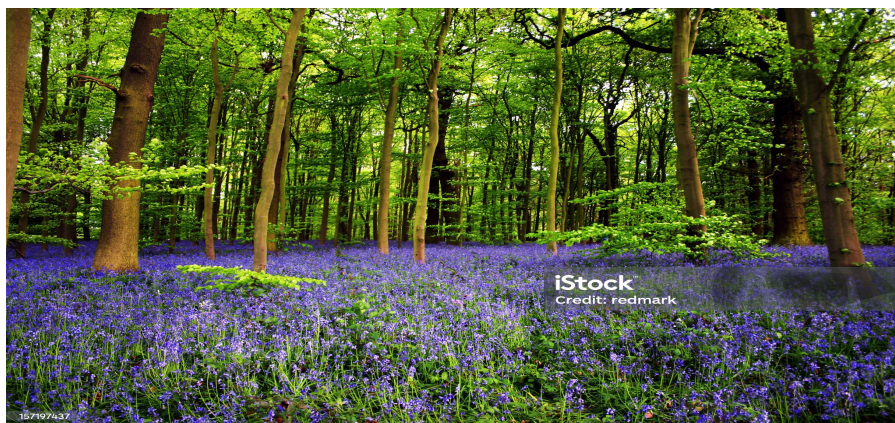
His grave? Not really. I just thought it would add to the realism.



As I said, Charlene and I did not get invited to the meeting. I was thankful for that. She did give me a rundown of what went on. Here is what she got from Antwan:

Some of the elders in the coven were ancient. Perhaps over 5000 years old. It seems that some rogue Vampire was creating fledglings for his own personal army. These new Vampires were hard to control. When first made, their blood thirst was enormous. It takes considerable restraint to hold them back. This was the case for those who mistakenly invaded Antwan's mansion. They had gone rogue on their own. That is why they had appeared in New Orleans. Antwan was tasked with hunting down this rogue Vampire and wiping out his army. He was given a contingent of fellow Vampires of equal strength like him. The ancients could sense where this errant Vampire operated from. Antwan did not have that ability yet. His compound was located in a remote hilly area about 50 miles east of Liverpool, England. Once again, we boarded a plane and this time flew to London. Of course Antwan and Charlene had vaults there. Antwan told me that he was going to be busy planning the assault on the Vampire compound. It might take several weeks before they were ready. My job was to entertain and keep Charlene happy. It was in my best interest to keep her happy. We were back in tour mode. I had never been to England. One of the tours we took was to Sherwood Forest. Home of the legendary Robin Hood.

Picture of Sherwood Forest



The legend of Robin Hood:

Stealing from the rich to give to the poor, Robin Hood and his merry men are a permanent part of popular culture. Set in England during the reign of King Richard the Lionheart, the adventures of Robin Hood follow the noble thief as he woos the beautiful Maid Marian and thwarts the evil Sheriff of Nottingham. The story has been around for centuries.

Here are two of the top actors photos seen here. I never saw Errol Flynn. Kevin Costner was one of my favorites.



Part of the tour included a lesson in archery. Charlene and I both enjoyed trying this and we turned out to be naturals. We continued to practice every evening. This would come in handy in the weeks that followed.

The Vampire Wars

My Friend the Vampire.

(Chapter 7), Last Chapter (Maybe?).

Charlene and I had two weeks of free time. What to do? England was not the culinary paradise like European countries. In fact, English food is kind of bland and unimaginative. Kind of like simple American food.

After having dined in the finest restaurant in the French Quarter, I was becoming picky.

Their big claim to fame was fish and chips. I have had H. Salt fish and chips in the U.S. and it is one of my favorites. H. Salt started his fish business in England during World War II. It was so successful that he expanded to America. At one time, there were over 500 H. Salt Fish and Chip establishments in the U.S. I think KFC bought them out and they eventually died out. They were a big competitor to KFC and I think their demise was planned.

Picture of Fish and chips served with a side of coleslaw and topped with a malt vinegar.



There are some exceptions though. Here are a few dishes that I had not tried back in the states.



Picture of Toad in a hole

It gets its name from the sausages poking up through the dough like frogs.

Picture of Steak and Kidney Pie



Seems that there are a lot of pot pies. These are not sweet pies, like cherry or lemon meringue. Instead, they fill them with vegetables and various meats.

Here is one that I made myself.



Picture of Onion and Cheese Pie

I suspect that chicken pot pie is also of English origin.



Picture of Lancashire Hot Pot

This is a meat stew with sliced potatoes on top.



Picture of Yorkshire Pudding

Made from a mixture of egg, flour and milk.

Called Popovers in the U.S.

Charlene and I did see some sights in London, but I won't bore you with the

details. We both had more serious thoughts on our minds.

While Antwan and his comrades were making strategic plans, I was too. Although, I had full confidence in him, it is better to be cautious than over confident.

You might think, what do I know of battle strategy? Did I go to West Point? Study historical battles? No, I watched TV. Tom Cruise in “The Last Samurai”. The entire Vikings series. I had learned that surprise was a valuable component of victory.

Charlene had awesome powers, but no battle smarts. I clued her in on my plan. She went all in. We would hide out in the hills above where the battle would take place. Watch it unfold. If our help was not needed, no one would be the wiser. I told you we had become excellent archers. My plan involved buckets of tar, fire, and arrows. I knew that fire was a useful weapon against vampires.

Let the games begin.

The Vampire War

The fledgling army was unaware of Antwan's presence. He only had a dozen or so aged warriors. Normally, that would have been sufficient to defeat these newbies. Even at 1 to 10 odds, the older vampires were superior. Unfortunately, the rogue army had grown to 200. Suddenly, this was no cake walk. Antwan had no other alternative. Any more delay would only make the situation worse.

The enemy was practicing combat tactics. It was early evening. Antwan ordered the advance. The rogue vampires were caught unaware. Many were cut down in the first few minutes of battle. They re-grouped and began to put up a formidable defense. Even though the initial surprise tactic cut the odds way down, Antwan's group was still at a disadvantage. The battle raged on.

Limbs being torn off, heads severed, the gnashing of teeth. Blood soaked the ground.

From our vantage point we could see the tide turn. Antwan's group was losing ground. Several of his members were already dead. It looked like it was time for us to make our play. We dipped our arrows in the tar, lit them, and started firing. Charlene could fire 5 arrows to my one. We were picking off the rogues one by one. It didn't kill them, but it disabled them so Antwan's warriors could finish them off. The rogue leader saw what was going on. He ordered a group to advance on us. There were too many for us to keep at bay. This tactic had two consequences. One good, one bad.

#1 Charlene and I were now in mortal danger.

#2 With the reduced number of enemies assigned to the battle ground, Antwan's group quickly took back the advantage.

Charlene engaged the first to arrive. Not sure what they had expected, but it wasn't and angry 1000 year old female vampire. I had never seen her angry. I hope to never have to see that again. She torn into them with as much fury as Antwan had when he emerged from his vault in New Orleans. She was holding her own. I had continued to fire arrows, but was soon out. One of the strays saw me and advanced. It looked like I was going to meet my end here on this English hillside. His blood thirst was apparent. I was going to be his next victim. As he quickly approached, I saw his fangs distend. Suddenly, his head was separated from his body and it slumped to the ground. Charlene had come to my rescue. I remember that she had told me she would repay me for my valiant attempt to protect her. She was between me and the rest of the tribe. She looked like a mother lioness protecting her cub. Those who were left, had seen her fury and were afraid to approach. It wasn't long before Antwan appeared and finished off the rest.

The battle was over!

Antwan assembled the remaining battle worn veterans. I assumed the ancient ones were already aware of the results. They could sense that no more rogue vampires existed. It was time for the warriors to disband and return to where they came from. I am sure that their status as a vampire didn't allow them to praise a mere mortal. As they paraded by me, I felt a gaze of respect from each one. This was enough acknowledgment for me.

Later, when we returned to London, Charlene and Antwan did heap a whole bunch of praise on me. Louis, I knew you were exceptional by the way you handled things for me in the past, but I never realized up until now, how exceptional you really were. I wasn't used to being praised at all and I was somewhat embarrassed by all the attention. Later that night, I wasn't embarrassed at all with the attention that Charlene laid on me.

The next evening Antwan said, the ancients are well aware of your part in the victory. Because of your ingenious surprise tactic, that secured out victory, the ancients awarded me a change in status. I would like to reward you too. Where in the world would you like to spend some vacation time? I will release you from your duties. Can Charlene go with me? He said of course she can. Then I would like to spend some time in Bora Bora. Snorkeling and sailing around the islands.

Louis lived a long and prosperous life. Charlene never left his side.

My Friend the Vampire
(Epilogue)

There was a time during Louis's long service to Antwan that he begged to be converted. Antwan said no. He had been ordered by the ancients to never create a new vampire. The war with the rogue vampires had set this precedent. Having these unruly vampires wandering around created a big danger for all. They had survived centuries by remaining inconspicuous. Louis was worried that he would some day lose Charlene. He wanted to be

with her forever. It was not to be.

Louis had continued to age normally while Antwan, and especially Charlene, never did. As he got older looking, his confidence in keeping Charlene waned. He thought that when he got too old, she would tire of him and bring home a new lover. Younger, more viral, more handsome. Charlene never did. She may never love another mortal as much as she did Louis.

Eventually, Louis quit accompanying Charlene out on the town. It happened one evening. They had been having dinner, when a brash young guy walked by their table. Hey grandpa, what are you doing with this luscious creature? Maybe it is time for her to upgrade. The implication was obvious. Louis just winked at Charlene. I think you're right. I think she would definitely go for a young buck like you. I am not against sharing. In fact, I am kind of a voyeur. I like to watch. We were just leaving to go back to her place. Want to join us? This guy, the fool that he was, agreed. As soon as we walked in the door, Charlene jumped on him. This was not the type of embrace that he had been dreaming of.

She made quick work of him. I did what I always do. I cleaned up the mess. That was the last time I went out in public with her.

Charlene never had another lover while Louis was alive. Louis passed away at the age of 81. He died peacefully with Antwan by his side and Charlene holding his hand. This was the first time either of them had ever shed crimson tears for a mortal.

The End

Remembering Louis

(Epilogue to the Epilogue)

Something vampires usually don't do. Have a wake for a mortal who passed away. But Louis was special to Antwan and Charlene. They decided to invite some of his and their friends to a wake.

Reminiscing about some of the things and places that made him special. Some were dramatic, some were humorous, some were tragic.

These stories spanned the time between the end of the vampire wars and when Louis turned 45. The time period was about 23 years.

Charlene almost drowned in Bora Bora. Louis forced her to learn to swim.

Vacation in Bora Bora

Charlene had been all over the world, but had never seen the Polynesian Islands. So she was as excited as Louis when they arrived. They rented one of those over water bungalows. Beside being able to look down through the



glass panels in the floor at the aquatic life, it was private enough to provide a good sense of security. Charlene had an acute sense of hearing as well as

superior night vision. So they felt at ease.

They had requested not to be disturbed. They even rejected maid service. Louis had arraigned to rent a small sailboat and had it tied up at the dock. Not everyone had the luxury of a private dock, but money was never an issue. Louis had to take an introductory sailing lesson to be allowed to take out the boat. One half day of instruction was enough. So they slept during the day and took the boat out each evening. Louis fished from the boat and dock. He BBQ'd fresh fish each evening for their meals. Louis explained to Charlene that on the boat he was the captain and she was the 1st mate. She thought this was funny, but enjoyed being under his command. He told her she must follow his orders no matter what. She willingly complied. Making love with the rocking of the boat was a new experience.

Charlene had brought cases of her mixed wine. That, along with sucking the blood out of the fresh fish was enough to sustain her. When her thirst became too great, they ventured to the mainland. Every part of the world has its percentage of villains waiting to prey on unsuspecting tourists. The villains became the prey instead of predator when they tried to accost us.

It happened one evening. A rogue wave caught the boat at an angle and Charlene toppled overboard. Louis heard the splashing and just thought she had gone for a swim. That perception changed when he heard her scream. He jumped in after her and told her to relax. Just like lifeguards do, he had her float on her back and he brought her back with one hand on her chin as he swam.

Back on board, he asked her, can't you swim? She was obviously in an irate mood. She snapped at him, do you think I faked this just so you could rescue me? Why didn't you tell me that you couldn't swim. I didn't want to look weak in your eyes. Vampires retained many of mortal's weaknesses. Insecurity was one of them. I could never think of you as weak. You have

lived for over 1000 years and never learned to swim. This was not a question. I had never swam before I became a Vampire, and I never needed too up until now. Well, I'm going to fix that. No, really, I don't think it is necessary. Too bad, I do. I still feel it is my job to protect you. I don't have to fight your fights, but I can do this for you to secure your future safety. So reluctantly, she endured the swim lessons with Louis. There was a shallow lagoon near their bungalow that was perfect for this task. It was shallow enough for her to stand, but deep enough to swim. During their time there, she did master it and was glad she did. After that, they did some night snorkeling. That added to their already enjoyable vacation stay.



Swimming with the stingrays and sharks.



During our vacation time there, Charlene's skin had started to return to its natural color. Goodbye Bora Bora.

How about the time Charlene got jealous. She thought Lewis was having an affair with a mortal.

Jealousy, Another Mortal Trait that got Carried Over

Lewis never talked about his family. He thought it prudent to keep a distance from them in order to avoid questions about where and what he was doing. He always told them that he was a merchant marine sailing around the world on a fishing charter. This would explain why he rarely contacted them. He did have one social media app that he watched occasionally. It was there that he had learned that his brother had passed away. His brother had married, but Louis didn't go to the wedding. The news that he did receive, told a sad tale for the wife. She had been left with lots of debt. Not even enough money to pay for the funeral. Louis felt guilty that he had not helped his brother. He didn't want to burden Antwan or Charlene with his personal problems. He started to be mysteriously missing for short periods and spend money on things that neither Charlene or Antwan could see was needed by him.

Charlene had never doubted Louis's affection before. Suspicion crept into her mind. Jealousy is a powerful emotion. Without knowledge of the situation, the mind creates all kinds of wrong images. At first, she just told herself that if Louis had a mortal girlfriend, she would just dump him. It would serve him right. After all the privileges he had received over the years. How ungrateful he was.

She could not let it go. She would shadow him and confront this new threat. It was not beyond her persona to eliminate anyone who touched what she considered her possessions.

She decided to follow him and on several occasions caught him meeting up

with another woman. He was even giving her money. It was time to confront both of them. The next time he met her, Charlene casually walked up to the table. She saw the look on Louis's face. But it wasn't fear, just surprise. She had honored his request to not read his mind, but she couldn't resist this time. Before she did anything rash, she learned that this woman was Louis's sister-in-law. If her face could have shown red, it would have been crimson. Louis introduced her as Mary, his brother's widow. She immediately turned off her invasion of his thoughts. So this was what the mystery was all about.

Charlene regained her composure and just said, glad to meet you. I was just strolling by and happened to see my boyfriend having lunch. I thought I would join him. Nice to meet you Charlene. Louis has been out of touch with us for a long time. Somehow, he learned of my financial difficulties and stepped forward. I wish he had told me and my brother about this, but he has always been secretive. I only see him occasionally myself when he returns from one of his fishing journeys. Louis knew that she had broken her promise. How would she have known of his cover story? My brother is financially well off. So we would be glad to help out when Louis is not available. Good save, Charlene.

Back home, Charlene was super apologetic. Sorry Louis for not trusting you and breaking my promise to not read your private thoughts. Charlene, there is only one woman in my heart. You never have to worry about me straying. I should have told you and Antwan about my family's troubles. That would have saved both of us a lot of embarrassment.

What about the time Louis was kidnapped by Antwan's mortal enemy Damen.

Damen was the one who had chased Antwan and Charlene across the sunlit dessert causing them to char their skin. If it hadn't been for Antwan's

foresight, they would have been blinded too. Antwan had caused Damen lots of grief and Damen was trying to take revenge. They had not crossed paths for centuries. Damen had heard of the vampire war and of the resourceful servant Louis. He figured that if he could capture this mortal, he could use him to lure Antwan into a trap.

It had happened like this:

Antwan and Charlene were safely secured in their vaults. Louis was tasked with something that had to be conducted during the daylight hours.

Can't remember the exact chore, but Louis was capable of defending himself against any mortal. A vampire as strong as Damen was another thing.

Damen carried out the first part of his plan without difficulty. Louis had no defense against someone as strong as Damen.

When Antwan and Charlene emerged from their sleep, a note was tacked on to their mansion's door front. If you ever want to see Louis alive, meet me at this location. A map accompanied the note. Antwan suspected who might be the author of the note. He had no intention of directly honoring this request. At least not alone. He knew it was some kind of trap. No mortal would dare attempt something like this.

Damen had indeed set a lethal trap for Antwan. Damen brought Louis to an abandoned farm. He had dug a pit in the darkened barn with a wooden slider on the roof. When he pulled on a rope, the panel would slide open and a lens would direct focused sunlight into the narrow pit. Anyone in the pit could not avoid the sun. This was an ingenious setup. He would place Louis in the pit, secured in irons, and tell Antwan to save him. He was going to drop a basket of poisonous snakes into the pit. If Antwan hesitated, it would be too late for Louis. While waiting for Antwan to show up, Louis had a chance to antagonize Damen with personal insults. You think you can outsmart Antwan? You are mistaken. He will figure out your clever plan and set a trap for you instead. What, are you chicken to face him one on one? Louis

had never lost his audacity. Shut up you weak mortal, or I won't wait for Antwan. I will kill you myself. Go ahead, Antwan or even Charlene will kick your ass.

Antwan contacted the Ancients. His elevated status allowed him the protection of the clan. Damen was not aware of this.

They sent Darik to accompany him.

In Gaelic, this vampire name means “strong.”

Antwan knew that there was an edict among the vampires that said: No vampire should harm another unless under duress of injury to oneself. In other words, it would be OK for Antwan to kill Damen, if his own life was in danger.

Antwan arrived at the farm. He walked into the barn and quickly assessed the situation. Darik hadn't shown himself yet. Not waiting for Damen to drop the snakes, he jumped into the pit and immediately started freeing Louis. Damen started to pull the rope and sunlight shown through. This was enough of a violation for Darik to halt the progress of the panel and subdue Damen. Some of the light did get through and its intensity burnt a patch of Antwan's skin before Darik reversed the panel. Both Antwan and Louis would have surely have lost their lives.

Darik was so much stronger than Damen, that he had no trouble restraining him. Darik asked Antwan, what do you want me to do with him? His violation is enough to be sentenced to death. I think death would be too kind for him. Take him back to Transylvania and secure him in one of our prisons until he goes mad. They do have these kinds of places in Transylvania. It is basically a deep well with slippery sides. Even strong vampires can't jump up high enough to escape. Each day, for a few minutes, the sun will shine directly down on the occupant. If that doesn't drive him mad, his blood thirst

will overpower him and he might even try to drink his own blood.

I am sure there are many more interesting adventures that occurred over the years, but I will leave with just these three.

After first completing the story, I felt that there were still some things left to tell. That is why I added this second epilogue. In writing these stories, the characters come alive in my mind. Sometimes I am reluctant to let them go.

End of Epilogue to the Epilogue

The Final End