

## A Found Child

I slammed Springer's head against the brick of the alleyway. If he breathed, he'd be purple by now. He was 5'9" with nearly white blond hair and violet eyes. It was the bloodline of my sire that gave him those eyes, and I was about to take them back if he didn't have the money he stole from me and a damned good excuse for his ippant message.

"Grrllbplmm." Springer gurgled.

My lip curled into a snarl. I wanted to properly crush his throat. After everything I had done for him, for nearly eighty years, the little bastard stole from me!

I'd spent fteen years tracking him down. All the way to America! I had to live out of a suitcase while trying to gure out where he'd gone! No servant to take care of my needs! Nothing!

It wasn't until a donor told me about a spell which hid you from others' sight, that I gured it out. My work was put on hiatus while I tracked my wayward childe. Fifteen damned years!

Going dormant for that long, leaving my territory for that long. I was homeless and reputationless now. Only a rumor, a ghost, in the world of the undead. His little game had cost me everything I'd worked for.

I tightened my grip on his neck. Taking his head off would make me happier than any damage I could do now, but I wanted more than a pound of esh. Of course he wouldn't be able to tell me anything if I crushed his throat. At least, not until he healed and I didn't want to wait that long.

I sighed, let him down, and stepped back. Springer dropped to his knees gripping his throat. I glared at him with disdain.

"Well, where is it?" I growled.

"I spent it all. I'm sorry, master! Please, don't kill me." He begged.

He was only a hundred years old, but he'd been trouble since before I brought him over. He wasn't my rst choice for a childe of mine. If not for the fact that his father had been a dear friend of mine, I wouldn't have.

Jacob always regretted having me turn his son. So did I. He'd wanted his son to live, but life as a vampire wasn't the same as life as a human. It had taken decades for the boy's memory to come back. Just in time for him to sit by his father's death bed.

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"What did you spend my money on, Springer?" I hissed, stepping closer again.

"A house, cars, blood, clothes. They're all yours... well, except the blood. I don't think her parents will sell her, but I can tell you who to contact to feed on her." He offered eagerly.

"Parents? You fed from a child?!" I saw red.

The words of the witch who had told me about the concealing spell rang in my head. He was hurting someone. He was hurting a child.

That was my one rule when it came to feeding. Never feed from someone who isn't able to understand what they're offering. Not the mentally disabled, not children, not intoxicated people, not the elderly. The punishment was death.

"It wasn't my fault! I said it as a joke and the mom just let me! I didn't know how to handle it when she took my joke seriously. Her mom insisted on triple the payment and let me have the girl. So... I fed on her." He insisted.

"You tell her, you were only kidding and NO ONE feeds on a child. What kind of parents would let that happen? Is her mother an addict?" I asked, livid.

"No. Super middle-class average family. She was selling blood because they needed the money. Now, I think they do it so they can play more."

"How long have you been feeding on the girl? You implied it was more than once."

"Ten years. I usually see her once a month. Last time, her parents said, if I doubled my payment, they'd let me take it from the artery in her thigh. That's why I've been working as an enforcer. I needed the money. She's the best thing I've ever tasted, master. I was addicted from the rst drop. It's been hell these last couple months, trying to earn it." Springer whined.

I snarled. "How many others feed on her?"

They would all die. Ending with Springer. Taking advantage of children made them monsters in fact instead of in name. I wouldn't let myself, my bloodline, or my people be tied to creatures who would do that.

"Silence is the broker. She'd know who else. She doesn't know that we book with the mom and feed on the kid. Silence just thinks the mom is popular because she's AB-. It's harder to nd here." Springer said.

"Until I take care of this, you will stay in town. Spells won't work this time. If you run, I will tie you to a tree and let the sun take you. Do you understand?" I said in a deadly tone.

"Yes, master."

"Take me to my house." I ordered and he led the way to his car, which was now mine as well.

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We drove through the city to an upper class neighborhood. Houses were large and spaced far apart. He pulled up to a gated driveway and pressed a button on the visor to open the gate.

There were security cameras on the stone posts that the iron gate was attached to. The long driveway was lined with trees. Lamps were dotted along the path, but they weren't lit.

As we approached the house, I was even more impressed. It was a large colonial style house. The porch had columns that reached up to the top of the second oor. It was white with blue shutters and a blue door. He parked the car and we went in.

The entry was vast with a marble staircase and marble oors. Nothing was on the walls and he made no move to turn on a light. A cheap table stood nearby and the fake wood print paper on it scratched as Springer tossed his keys onto it. I winced. A house like this didn't deserve cheap furniture.

I wish I could say that was the worst thing. Unfortunately, he'd decided to decorate the house with furniture and items he found either on the street or at Wal-Mart. It was inexcusable. He'd been here for nearly a decade.

He should have decorated the rst winter he was there. Stores were open after sunset in the winter. There was no excuse for such a disgraceful setting.

"This is appalling. You have no window coverings, where do you sleep?" I asked.

Springer pulled out a ashlight and showed me down to the basement where there were no windows. A mattress lay on the oor. The smell of dirt, dust, and mildew tainted the air and made me sneer in disgust.

Why would a man buy a house like this if he were planning to live in the basement on an old mattress like a junkie? I thought I'd suffered. He did this to himself through his own laziness and thoughtlessness.

"You've lived here for at least ten years without basic utilities. Without moving out of the basement. Why didn't you get a human servant to take care of your needs?" I asked.

"I tried, but I couldn't keep them. They fell out of my thrall in three days." He admitted.

"You didn't feed them any of your blood? You were just using your mind control?" I pressed. i\*\*\*t.

"I... I didn't think to do that. Sorry, master." Springer hung his head.

Even when he was alive he'd been ighty and impulsive. It had caused the wound that made his father ask me to save him. Forever twenty and seeming to be mentally as ageless as he was physically. I sighed.

This city was perfect. The vampire population was low enough to not have many conicts, but large enough to never feel alone. There were plenty of humans to feed on and a blood broker when you didn't feel like hunting. I was sure there was a daytime servant agency as well, Springer just hadn't thought to look for it.

"Give me the address for Silence, then I want you to prepare a place for me to sleep that is clean and safe. When I return, you WILL be here. Do you understand?" I growled.

"Yes, master." Springer bowed and dug through his wallet, handing me a card with a heart dripping blood and the name of the broker on it.

I grabbed the keys on the way out and put the location in the sat nav in the car. I had to nd the vampires who fed on the girl and end them, have Silence remove the mother from her menu, and gure out a way to make it up to the girl who my i\*\*\*t childe turned into a delicacy in this territory. At least one of those things could be nished tonight.