

The Rat Man & The Camarilla Dog

”Isn’t the one by the bar that Camarilla bitch?” The words came from the table behind her where she sat at the bar. They hadn’t been spoken loudly but as she sat there, alone, with no one to keep her company, they rang clear in her ears. The voice was male and had a distinctive tilt to it. The distinctive tilt of stupid.

She rolled her eyes at the obvious pun, like she hadn’t heard that one a million times before, but the fire deep in her belly had already started to simmer, humming, looking for a fight. It itched in her fingers, they wanted to be fists, ready to throw a punch if needed. It would be so easy. She let it simmer though, blowing a few short strands of night black hair from her face and moving her fingers, as if to not let them close into fists.

“Could be. Wouldn’t mind tapping that though” another voice answered and she could almost feel the male vampire’s eyes on her. She knew that she wasn’t the most beautiful woman in the world, far from it. Her face was rather asymmetrical with a large, somewhat crooked nose and dark brown eyes that were too big for her face. Her body disproportionate with to large hip to boob ratio to look perfect. What could possibly make up for her flaws was the confident she wore them with. And from behind, like the men was looking at her, she knew she looked good. They must have made so crude gesture towards her back because soon they both burst out laughing. The sound grated against her eardrums. If they were looking for a fight, they had certainly barked up the wrong tree.

“Nah, don’t bother” She can hear the mirth in the first voice. “I heard she fucks the Sheriff” he continued and, well, that rumor just can’t go around now can it? If the fire laid simmering in her belly before, it suddenly flared up, up to just under her skin. She felt as if it should be visible, a subtle glow just below her pale complexion. She still had her jacket on her, easily concealing both her large gun, and the stake she always had hidden in a holster at her back. The jacket was not fitted enough for it to be visible through the fabric.

It was almost too easy for her to jerk the wooden spike from behind her back, turn around and stake the male vampire with the stupid voice and grating laugh. The whole bar came to a stop, every vampire in there turning towards the ruckus with no words longer escaping their lips. The annoying friend of the now staked vampire had no time to move before she drew her gun, heavy in hand, and aimed it at his head. She kept it there, firmly aimed, as she retracted the stake from the other guy’s chest.

He fell to the floor, limp, torpor had taken him instantly. The friend just stared at her, and more importantly, at her gun, his mouth opening and closing like a fish. She raised a perfectly curated eyebrow at him and it snapped shut immediately. He opened it just enough to force out a strangled sorry. Satisfied, she put the gun back by her hip, she had never released the safety of it anyways. The vampire wouldn’t know that anyway. He looked like a Toreador or something.

She put the stake back at her back and feels how the blood on it seeps into her shirt. She swears to herself, she really should have cleaned it before holstering it again. She turns towards the bar with an agitated sigh. Blood never washed out nicely from clothes, especially not white dress shirts. That’s what you get for dressing up she supposes.

The clock above the lines of bottles behind the bar catches her attention. Shit, she was going to be late. Again. Fuck. She locks her dark brown eyes with the bartender's pale blue on the other side of the counter.

“Can you call this in to the Sheriff?” she asks the ghoul behind the bar. He swallows and nods. She gives him a dazzling, obviously fake smile and with that as her goodbye, she leaves.

She feels it first. The short hairs at the back of her neck standing up. Someone is watching her. She looks around the street but there is not a soul in sight. She is all alone at this street and yet, someone is watching her as she hurries onwards. It's an unpleasant feeling, feeling her body with unease instead of anger.

She reaches for her pack of cigarettes without thinking about it. She knows that they don't work no more. She knows that nicotine only gives you pleasure through your lungs, and well, hers doesn't work anymore. She has tried it all, drinking blood from someone who just had a fag, magic cigarettes, but nothing would ever beat the feeling of the stale smoke, a pale morning on her old balcony, before the rest of the household had woken. She missed it so much it hurt at times like this. She finds one and lights it as far away from herself as possible. The small flame that used to be comfort, now nothing more than a spark of deep fear, flickers as she lights the cigarette. When it is done, she hurries to put it in her mouth, letting it dangle in the corner of her mouth where it belonged. It gave a little comfort for the simple reason of ordinariness.

She hears it next. Suddenly her steps at the concrete is not the only ones. She hears it from the alleys she walks past, the rooftops. The distinct pitter patter of small, rodent feet against a hard surface. Every surface. She hates it. She swears she can see them now too, their small eyes, glimmering in the darkness following her as she walks down the street. She is almost at the meet up now so it shouldn't surprise her, not really, but it still does. The voice chocks her though.

“You're late” She flinches and turns toward the dark alley that the sound had come from with a record-breaking speed. The only thing she could see at first glance was the small, marbles of reflection at shoulder-level, indicating the small eyes of a rat.

“Jesus Christ, Why do you need to make such a dramatic entrance?” she mutters as she turns towards the man hiding in the shadows. He slowly steps out into the light, the light first catching the glimmering, silver details of his cane and his suit. The white undershirt is the next visible thing, together with an awful, paisley tie. It reminds her of her living years. She hates it. Eventually the black of his suit is visible, his small, and crooked body visible in the light from a lamp post. On one of his drooping shoulders sit a fat, large rat, his eyes firmly tracked on her as she waits for him to walk out into the light.

His face is old, and worn, the white, wispy hair, combed back into something that could resemble a back slick. What always was eye catching about the old man was none of these things though. It was his eyes. They were large and unseeing, a milky white layer forever dimming their light. They almost looked like small ponds of silver in this light.

“Ephraim” she greeted him and he grinned at her, small teeth looking sharp between his lips. She walks towards the opening of the alley and rest herself against a lamppost, just outside it. He comes to a stop inside of the alley, still invisible from the other side of the road, or any other part of the road for that matter.

“Rosamund” he leered. She felt a shiver run up her spine. It was only he that still called her by her full name. He sounded like her father. Or sire.

“Sorry I’m late” she said, taking a drag from her cigarette. Nothing happened, no raw edges soothed, and she quickly wondered if she had died craving a fag, and it was that feeling that now was forever haunting her. Perhaps it wasn’t so weird that she always felt so close to exploding.

“That is what happens when you stake a poor soul in a bar” he says, his words discolored by a Russian accent and fair bit of mirth. She makes an aborting motion with her shoulders, something resembling a shrug.

“He’ll wake up eventually” She shrugged again. “Besides, he sure as hell was no poor soul” She smiled a small smile, the corners of her mouth in a distinct upward angle.

“He had it coming” she finished and by the looks of the rat man’s smile, he knew it too. The fat rat on his shoulder almost seemed to grin as it looked her up and down.

“So, what can I do for you this morning?” the change of tone was palpable. She would go so far as to say that they were friends, or at least something close to it. She wasn’t sure if neither a guy like him nor a gal like her actually could have friends, but they came pretty close witch each other. But by the change of tone, it was clear that this wasn’t a friendly visit, it almost never was between them, friendship or not. This was business. She feels herself improving her posture by his tone alone.

“I need a favor” You did not go to this man for anything less than a favor. His answering smile was predatory.

The anger from before is still simmering under her skin. She feels for her pack of cigarettes again as she takes a turn toward a less dark, less dirty street.

The meeting had gone well but nothing seemed to sooth her frayed edges, not even a good deal. She sighed around the cigarette, smoke exhaling from dead lungs. But at least she had got what that woman had wanted, and that meant a job well done. No matter what the cost of it eventually was going to be.

Her phone buzzed in that short pattern, signaling a new text message. She fished it out from her inner pocket, unlocking it to look at the pesky, little screen. It was an old thing, not one of those new smart ones, with a screen the size of a eraser and the rest of the phone just buttons. She hated it.

Liam 04.30: *Staking a guy? Really?*

She snorted a laugh, shifting the phone in her hand so she could write out a reply. She really wanted a new one, this one was slow and ancient.

Rose 04.31: *He deserved it. Did you have to go there?*

She continued homewards. The city was beautiful in the early morning, with almost no one in sight, not even in these part of the town. She wasn’t too far from home, smack in the middle of Brujah territory, smack in the middle of the sucky parts of town. Like always, brjuah had drawn the short straw.

Another buzz.

Liam 04.35: *Nab. Sent Brody. He isn't too happy with you at the moment*

Four minutes for that reply? He sure was an old fart. She typed out a reply.

Rose 04.35: *Screw Brody*

She stopped outside her own building, waiting for his reply. It was still quite early, even though dawn neared. While she waited for his reply she finished her first cigarette and lit another. Eventually his reply came through.

Liam 04.38: *I thought that was what you kept me around for*

She grinned and started walking towards the finer parts of town, she still had enough time to get there well before sunrise.

Rose 04.39: *Your place?*

She awoke to her annoying ringtone. The warmth laid dormant deep in her belly, soothed by Liam's touch. Shit, where was that stupid phone of hers? She had programmed it so it had a different ringtone depending on who called and how important the caller was. She knew this tone by heart. She found her phone on the side of the bed answered with a groan.

"What the fuck do you want, Brody?" she said. The caller on the other end just snorted, way too pleased with himself to have awoken her. Beside her, Liam groaned and opened his eyes towards her, a lazy grin on his face.

"You are a down right bitch, you know that right?" Somehow, his stammer lessened when he threw insults at her. Liam sniggered beside her, of course he'd heard. He shuffled closer to her in the bed, starting to kiss her shoulder. He was such a tease.

"People has got staked for calling me less, jerk" she muttered and she heard Brody laugh on the other end.

"Yeah yeah, whatever" he shuffled on the other end and suddenly he sounded much more serious, all mirth gone.

"Look, I wouldn't have bothered if it weren't something" She sat up straighter in bed. What in the world. Liam followed, suddenly also serious.

"What is it, Brody?" she asked. She shifted so Liam heard better to, as if he didn't have perfect hearing.

"They found the body" she swears profusely and Liam takes the phone from her as she rips the sheets from her body and storm out of bed.

"This is the Sheriff. What do you know?" Liam asked into the phone as he also rose from the bed.

She did not even have it in her to be upset that he so casually outed they were together to Brody. She did not even have it in her to find her own clothes, just ripping out one of Liam's shirt from his closet.

They had found the fucking body.