

Forgive me Father, I like to Sin

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Chapter 1: The Council of the Damned

Eddie sat in the atrium looking up at the stars contemplating his situation. One per century he thought seemed unfair but then again the gift being an Ardeth was immeasurable. There were 49 now and one more would be allowed “rebirth” as the century took shape. There were ten potential candidates and after the first round of preliminary talks they were narrowed to three. Eddie was eager to find out if his candidate made it through the cut so when the invitation arrived inviting him to petition before the council he felt both elated and tense.

Eddie wasn't sure he was making the right choice. Not who he chose, but his reasons. Was he being selfish? He loved this woman, she was extraordinary and he connected to her, something that did not come easily for him.

For years Eddie had tormented himself nightly by spending so much time with her. He followed her every move, watched her, learned who she was and ultimately he fell in love her, but all from a far. It started out simply enough. Eddie was bored and one night came upon her as she worked. He thought she was delicious to look and he amusing himself nightly watching her. It was a simple game he had come to play with people of the dayside. He would find someone interesting, study them and eventually move on but she was different. He hated her being someone else's. When he watched her with the others he was convinced that he was the one person who could understand her and give her what she needed. Eddie was a very private man and never revealed his true feelings. He was hardened by his life on the streets but deep within him was the man he truly was. His need to open up to this woman was a long time in coming but something he recently allowed himself to admit. He felt very much alone in his world of never ending nights and he wanted to share it with someone. She above all could relate to him and it was this deep seeded need that drew him closer to her in the continual conflict he faced in his life. He did not know what he would do if she was not chosen.

Eddie spent the next two nights preparing. He thought earnestly about what he wanted to convey to the council. He had to find the right words to convince them that his protégé was the only worthy candidate.

The two nights passed quickly and when Eddie was called into the chamber he greeted the council, his hands were colder than usual and had he been human he would have been perspiring. Looking around the table he smiled at each of them. Some he liked, others he did not, but the fact remained no matter his personal feelings he had to follow protocol and although he had been before the council prior to tonight he found this process particularly grueling. He did not care to participate in these types of political arenas. Politics was something he gladly left behind when he became a vampire but it became a sore point when he once again found himself in this situation.

Trying not to dwell on this Eddie looked around the room and with a familiar nod and addressed the council. “As you all know I've been watching a potential candidate for some time now. I'm here tonight to win her the gift of rebirth.” Eddie calmly sat down and continued.

“Her adventure started with the death of her husband. He was a army colonel killed in battle. After his death she tried modeling for painters and for a short time worked as an instructor at a riding school. She was not accustomed to fending for herself and barely made ends meat. She was forced to sell her estate and took a small flat in a less than desirable neighborhood. While at a local pub one evening a “working girl” arrived and sat down next to her. Mistaking her for one of her own they struck up a conversation. She learned that there was a good sum of money to be made in less desirable jobs. She was broke and had little alternative. Subsequently she acquired a stage name and found herself performing in a local dance hall. She had no money for a costume so she covered herself in the expensive veils that her husband had purchased for her when he traveled through Europe. They were the only things left from her former life that she had not yet sold off. While she performed men threw money on the stage enticing her to remove more and more of the veils.

Over the next few years she danced in salons, music halls and theatres all over Europe, Monte Carlo, Madrid, Berlin, Vienna & Cairo. Thousands flocked to see her perform in show halls all over the world. Men fell in love with her foolishly promising her anything in return for sexual favors.

Throughout her career she managed to dance her way into the hearts and bedrooms of countless well-to-do lovers, many of which had royal connections. It is rumored that she was the mistress of Germany’s crown Prince William and his son. She had several liaisons with political and military leaders.

Because she had so many highly-ranked military men as lovers, as well as, notable French and German politician, she earned a free diplomatic ticket to countless embassies and countries all over the world.

The French suspected her of being a spy and she was interrogated twice. They could not confirm her activities and she was released.

The French were correct though not only had she spied for numerous countries, she transported secret plans & projects through out these governments, stopped assassinations and assassinated quite a few others. She is particularly lethal with swords and daggers and her ability to assume a lover/confidant role has caused many a down fall, a list to long to recite.

She has no family, no children and no ties to humans.”

The tall man with dark hair who stood viewing the proceedings from the doorway stepped forward. He had been quietly observing Eddie and these proceedings the entire time. He enjoyed studying people, finding mortals and kin alike fascinating. “Can she be trusted? When he spoke his voice was commanding and demanded respect. “This is a major concern and if the French have picked her up twice she is under their suspicion. I wonder if it is wise to draw that kind of attention to ourselves.”

Eddie soberly looked at him, “She was born here in London but traveled extensively with her parents. They never found themselves in one place for very long and I believe she wishes to

return home, thus it is my belief that if we offer her sanctuary and safety here in London she will ally with us. She is unknown in Britain. She could easily travel throughout the country unnoticed. Though we do not have gems that Royals have paid her, we do have other advantages that she might find enticing enough to secure her as a trustworthy member.”

The Sovereign’s eyes never moved from Eddie “and what would be enticing enough for her to join us when she has such a lucrative business of her own?”

Eddie knew his protégé would be closely scrutinized and he had tried to be prepared for every eventuality, though he was not. Now was the time to do what needed to be done. He knew he had to answer quickly and positively if he had any hopes of persuading this council.

Eddie watched the Sovereign for a moment than spoke. “She is smart enough to know her days are limited as a spy. If she is caught she will be executed for treason. She is seen by her peers as nothing more than a whore. We have the ability to offer her a legacy among us that she would never know as a mortal. Power and strength, but more than any of these things we can offer her the gift of acceptance and the ability to allow her to be who she is with the respect she desires.”

Eddie could be quite convincing and although he did not hear the other two vampires’ arguments he felt sure that he had represented himself and his protégé well. He tried not to be anxious but he felt very impatient. He was the last to present and knew the decision would be handed down tonight.

When Eddie finished speaking the Sovereign looked around the table to gauge the thoughts of the other council members. He could read them, one of the many gifts he had been blessed with in his rebirth. All vampires had the same potential for developing, but like mortals they were individuals and no two vampires were alike. Anthony’s bloodline was the Ardeth. He took great pride in being a vampire but particularly an Ardeth. He was wise and highly respected. One did not become Sovereign easily in a bloodline especially when vampires were so damn territorial. There weren’t many of them and for good reason, but this Sovereign was a fair and just man and extremely keen in leading his bloodline. The Sovereign walked to the door, opened it and invited the other two vampires back into the room. Once they were seated the Sovereign spoke. “This has been a very tough decision all the potential candidates were very worthy of joining us, but as you all know we can only allow one. Eddie’s eyes wondered the room; he was listening but felt distracted by his desire to be chosen. He wondered if the other two felt as passionately about their protégé’s as he did.

The Sovereign said the decision had been made. Eddie closed his eyes for a moment and the Sovereign stood. Eddie could hear him rising even though he was almost silent in his movement. Eddie did not lack self esteem but tonight he doubted himself greatly. In the few seconds it took for the Sovereign to rise Eddie ran the entire presentation over in his head trying to determine what he could have said in a more persuading manor. He wondered if he had stumbled or stammered and thought of a few things he could have added. He silently cursed himself for missing some important points. He was so immersed in his thinking he did not notice that the Sovereign walked toward him. It was only after he was touched on the shoulder that it brought him back to the present and when he heard the Sovereign say “Come with me and we can iron

out the details.” It was only in that moment Eddied realized he had been chosen and he sighed inwardly relieved.

He smiled as he was congratulated by the council but all the while he couldn't wait to leave and finalize the proceedings. At first it all felt like a haze but than there was a pump of adrenalin through his veins. The Sovereign sensed his anticipation and quickly concluded the gathering. He said his fair wells and walked Eddie back to his office.

Chapter 2: Friendly Fire

“You’re handling this one personally Tony?” Eddie and Irons were long time friends and in private spoke as such. Irons had recruited Eddie many years ago. Even though Irons was young at the time he was destined to succeed. Irons knew what he needed to build a strong basis for his new found family. Eddie was a man of honor in a world of thieves and deviants. This was what first drew Irons to him. Eddie was no common thug. He lived by the rules of the streets. As ironic as it might sound, as a hit man and as a vampire Eddie possessed superior morals and a respect for life more so than most that lived by the dayside. What Eddie lacked socially he made up in ambition. He was an orphan and out on the streets fending. He learned how to play the game early on and made some powerful allies.

Irons first met Eddie when he was stating out. Eddie was running numbers for a local mob boss. Gambling, liquor, prostitutes were all illegal and Eddie gained a sizable profit giving the common man the simple pleasures their government denied them. As time passed Eddie moved up the corporate ladder so to speak. Irons was a few ranks ahead of him but they watched out for each other quickly becoming friends. Both men knew that no matter what they could count on one thing... each other. They lived and died together a bond not many had. Eddie was of Irons blood and a link in the Ardeth chain.

Irons leaned back in his chair smiling at Eddie “I have been for some time now. I like our family knowing I am here for them.” Irons had the misfortune of inheriting his position from a previously corrupt leader. He had all but destroyed the lineage that Irons was fighting to rebuild. It was truly ironic how vampiric society mirrored humans, even to the point of self-destruction.

“She will serve us well. Eddie said proudly. “You know I would never waste the council’s consideration attempting to recruit someone not worthy of all we have to offer.”

Recruiting was highly frowned upon. The nature of these creatures and the need to feed from human life made it an impossibility to over breed. An educated Sovereign knew that over population would create problems of astronomical proportion. It was a Sovereign’s job to monitor his bloodline to the point of strict enforcement of over breeding. Eddie understood this and felt lucky to be in this position. 49 Ardeth resided in London, and each century another would be added. Eddie’s protégé had won him this century’s honor.

Irons always made it a point to listen to what was being said, not just the words, but the feelings and sentiments behind them. It was something he believed helped him keep order while gaining respect. “I have to agree she will be an interesting addition though I can’t help but wonder what's in it for you?”

“She has talent, what can I say. Her skills impress me and I would enjoy having someone with her experience as mine.” It was the “mine” that caught Irons attention. Immediately he was intrigued and wanted to know what was going on in Eddie’s head.

Irons believed he knew the answer before he asked. He was good at reading people and knew Eddie a long time. "Well let's determine what you mean by "mine" Eddie." Iron's enjoyed playing with him, just an amusement that friends sometimes do to each other when they are engaged in friendly verbal combat.

Eddie knew where this was going and he smirked. "I wish to take her. Make her one of us."

Irons slowly reached forward and out of his desk draw pulled out a box of cigars. It was one of his guilty pleasures in life that he refused to give up as a Vampire. Taking the cigar out of the box he touched it as one would touch a lover, smelling up one side and down the other, taking pleasure in its scent. Extending the box he offered one to Eddie. Irons clipped the end and instinctively Eddie reached for the lighter. He lit his friends cigar and than his own.

"So she is merely a commodity?" Irons inquired, advancing the pace in his chess match of words.

Eddie scrambled trying to think of what to say but it had been a long night and mentally he was exhausted. "She would be part of our lineage, a part of all of us. I would merely be her Master."

Irons smiled knowing he had flustered his friend. "You know you really disappoint me sometimes Edward. Are you really going to sit across from your old friend and tell me that she's just business?"

Eddie took another puff on his cigar knowing he was ousted. "Should that part matter?"

Irons finding it all amusing thus far interjected a serious point. "It matters if it compromises my ability to use her effectively on our team."

Eddie looked at Irons and decided to lay his cards on table. "I desire her Anthony, I'm sure you know that already."

Irons smirked knowing Eddie well "It's obvious my friend."

"You know me as well as I know myself Tony. I'd never let a woman come between us. Let me have her. I will make her a valuable asset and in the end we all will be happy."

Irons taped his fingers on the desk and took a long puff, "What makes you think she will want this?"

"Just a feeling I have. Just a feeling...." Eddie whispered as if he hoped it was true. "She will be intrigued, she will want this." Eddie assured Irons. Ironically it was Eddie who really wanted this. It had been a long time since he was drawn to a mortal. He spent years following her and now was his chance to make her his own. If he could.....

"You know, if she does not comply her life will be forfeit."

Eddie knew this was a give-in and it was one of the reasons he spent so much time debating this issue prior to appearing before the council. "I will do it myself if that is what is to be." It would kill him to end her life but it was a chance he had to take.

Irons looked soberly at Eddie, "Once you have made contact Eddie there's no turning back."

Eddie looked at him, "I know the rules. Things will be taken care of either way."

Irons was confident in his friend's convictions. "Eddie you're responsible from this point on. Convincing her, grooming her and making her part of our society. You are liable for her **with your life**. Her accomplishments are yours to benefit from but her failures are yours as well." Irons paused then smiled widely. "I think we have an understanding Edward. You both have my blessing as your friend and Sovereign."

Eddie stood up and smiled. He was pleased by the evening's outcome but knew it was just the beginning.

"When it has been taken care of bring her to meet me." Irons said rising as well.

"I will make contact shortly. I have watched her for a long time, but I've been careful. She is not aware of me yet." Eddie said straightening out his suit jacket.

"You are nothing if not careful Eddie. I would assume you have things to tend to and I don't wish to keep you"

The two men embraced as brothers. Eddie smiled and shook Irons hand tightly.

Chapter 3: Best Laid Plans

They danced around the ballroom for at least an hour, her date obviously impressing with her graceful moves. Her face covered in beautiful makeup, her body adorned in an elegantly embroidered dress and her neck... mmmmm that lovely, smooth, supple neck, exposed by the low neckline of her dress which had been carefully dabbed by expensive perfume most likely from Paris.

Her attention remained on her date the entire night. From the moment she walked into the ballroom it would seem that no one else was in the room. He did not know her, but she most definitely knew him or at least believed she did. It had been two days since she was hired by the well-dressed gentleman in the restaurant. Two days, in which she spent searching for her target, learning about him, getting to know who he was. I was impressed by her work. In those two days she had learned all that she possible could which was no easy feat as the man in the restaurant did not make this easy for her.

I spent the night watching her, studying her techniques. They were quite impressive to say the least. She spent the early part of the evening showering him with attention while dismissing any other suitors. Her intention was to make him feel like he was the only one in the room, her only point of interest, which she did brilliantly. I myself would have believe her had I not known better.

She knew just what to do. When the music picked up she impress him with her moves and when the songs slowed down she rested her head on his shoulder whispering sweet nothings in his ear.

Throughout the course of the evening she convinced her date to let her whisk him away to a private location where they could be alone and enjoy each other's company. She impressed upon him what could happen if he allowed his body guards to remain behind, filling his head with vivid images of eroticism, while all the time she simply was trying to get him alone so she could do what she was paid to do... eliminate him.

She was a hard woman to refuse. He was more than eager to leave with her in a private coach where they would drive to a deserted part of town where they could enjoy the moonlight and each other. Spending the next hour talking and playfully snuggling in the back of the coach they traveled to a small park on the outskirts of town where few, if any would be at this time of the night.

When they arrived it was all she said it would be. The park itself rested on a cliff which overlooked the entire city. The railing was carved out of marble and clearly quite old and all that separated someone from a 100 foot drop. The park was lush with plants and trees, but tonight no other life existed here.

Once they were settled, the driver was dismissed and the couple sat on a bench gently kissing as the moon lit the sky. Her kisses became more intense as she reached into a hidden compartment in her sleeve retrieving a small but lethal dagger. Oblivious to her actions the man continued to

passionately kiss her. While I knew this was just another job, I must admit that she seemed to take a certain amount of pleasure in the physical aspects of romancing him.

When he least expected it she drove the dagger deep into his back, aiming for a lung, hoping for a quick and relatively painless death. Her date flung her back and violently swung his arms around in a fit of rage. He looked at her confused and as he gasped for breath she simply stood up and flattened out the slightest crease in her dress. She watched as he fell to the ground convulsing without showing the slightest bit of unease. It was quite remarkable and I marvel at her ability to do such a deed without a hint of emotional connection.

As she walked away smiling to herself, I began to applaud. Her calm, controlled exterior quietly diminished when she turned to see me clapping. Perhaps it was the fact that she thought I was dead, or perhaps that I was licking my own blood from the knife or maybe it was the animal like teeth I flashed at her when I smiled.

“Bravo!! You truly are ready.”