

I Drink, Therefore I Am

by Dan Shaurette

Darkness.
Silence.
Peace.

For me, these things are inseparable. For only when I find the first two elusive prizes can the latter be found.

My peace is shattered by the piercing squeals of my alarm clock. I find my shotgun which is always laid beside my bed -- loaded -- and aim blindly towards the source of the offending noise. The bright orange flash quickly cuts through the night and stops the alarm's droning. I lose more alarm clocks that way.

Don't get me wrong, I don't enjoy shooting at my property, but that smoking pile of electronic bits in the corner destroyed a perfectly good wet dream. I hate it when that happens.

Not to mention that I now have one royal headache and my stomach feels like performing its impression of Mount Vesuvius. It must be time to visit my altar to the Porcelain god. Maybe my prayers will be answered tonight.

Hah. Yeah right. No gods have answered my prayers lately. If they did I'd be dead now. I'd rather be dead than this... undead thing. Yeah, I'm a vampire -- one of these days I'll have to accept it. But probably not tonight. For now, I just have to remember not to drink from a lush, no matter how easy prey they are.

Ah, there's that feeling again. All too familiar it is to me -- that cold, gnawing sensation. The "Hunger Pains From Hell" I call them -- that's probably not far from the truth, depending on who you get your truth from. That cold emptiness can only be sated on warm blood. And satisfaction will have to come soon, or this headache will be the least of my worries.

Glowing.
Flashing.
Enticing.

The night is full of electric lights that line the streets and storefronts. Neon signs declare the brands of beers on tap, the level of nudity of the entertainment, and the hours that the places are open.

Tonight I choose to pass those signs to approach one that declares "Battle of the Bands" on one line and "\$500 Tonight" underneath. Some music. Some dancing. Some underage girl out past curfew and couldn't give a damn. Sounds like a perfect Monday night.

My last necessary breath was taken two years ago, when I was 23 -- that was also when I renewed my driver's license. For now, it fools those that require identification -- like the bouncer here at the door. I give him the fiver required for cover and he stamps my hand with an ultraviolet mark. I also take the ballot he hands me and stuff it in my jeans' pocket.

A rough, loud, and annoying heavy metal band is ranting on stage -- if you could call it a band -- it's more like one drummer drowned out by four guitarists trying to outdo each other and a lead singer that desperately needs a lozenge.

Because of the noise on stage, my headache starts to pick up again, but I try to push beyond the pain. The beautiful brunette tending the bar sees me walk in and sit down on the stool furthest away from the sorry excuse for music. She has to yell over the chaos to say, "Hello handsome... the name's Michelle. Can I get you anything?"

"Earplugs!" I shout back. She smiles an angelic smile, but if she laughed I didn't hear her. She returns, "I mean to drink."

Another time, another place, I'd lay her down in leather 'n lace, but for now I decide to say, "A Virgin Mary... and no celery!"

"Sure thing, coming up!" she yells back. She turns around and walks off to fix the drink. Meanwhile, the group of long-haired freaks on stage finally give up in their attempt to entertain. Surprisingly, the rest of the people present are applauding them -- I hope it was pity that's encouraging their collective tasteless display.

Michelle walks back to me carrying a tall glass of a red liquid, but it isn't tomato juice -- and thank God it isn't that Clamato crap -- but something more welcoming.

Michelle smiles and says, "This should help that headache of yours, sugar. It's on me."

Impressive... how does she know I have a headache. Is my body language screaming out my pain? She grins knowingly. Aha, that beautiful smile reveals two sharp, extended canine teeth. Ironically, that sets me at ease.

I return a similar smile and introduced myself, "My name is Donovan, but please call me Don." She extends her hand and says, "Then call me Max." As I kiss her hand, I crook an eyebrow as if to ask about the nickname. "It's a long story," she answers.

Taking a sip from the drink, I'm startled by the purity of the salty, crimson liquid. "Thank you for the drink, m'Lady. I expect my headache will disappear with the aid of this drink."

She laughs, this time I can hear the charming laugh, saying, "You're welcome -- it isn't easy finding a virgin named Mary anymore."

I was reminded of the dangers of drinking and laughing as some blood almost burst from my nose when I heard the joke. She laughs again and hands me a bar napkin. I nod my thanks and wipe my bloody nose.

I begin to drink again and after a gulp I ask, "If there is anything I can do in return for this...?"

She leans over the bar as if she's going to whisper and the maddening scent of lilacs in bloom overpowers me. She smiles and says, "Well, if you wear the leather, I'll wear the lace..."

I smile, acknowledging her mental gift -- I only know a couple vampires with the Sight, and I'm not one of them -- and I find myself looking forward to what else she can do. I ask, "When do you get off... work, I mean?"

"The place will close after the last band plays and the winner is announced. I'm outta here after that. Should be no later than 1 am."

I took a pen lying on the bar and wrote my address on another bar napkin. "Meet me there at 1:30?"

"It's a date. Should I bring anything?"

I reply, "No, I'll take care of everything," and then I take another draught of the not-so-freshly-squeezed drink.

"Well, the last band is almost finished setting up. These guys are great."

"Oh no, it isn't another trasher band, is it?" I whine.

"No. This is an alternative band -- my personal favorite. They play here a lot. I'm rooting for them, because they deserve to win."

Cautiously I ask, "Yeah? What's their name?"

The Narrow Way. I think you'll really like them."

I take another draught from the drink and say, "They're cool as long as they don't bring my headache back."

She spied an empty table in the center of the room and suggests I take that seat for the most enjoyment. She points, "Go ahead and take your drink and enjoy yourself. I'll see you later tonight." Leaning over the bar again, she kissed me full on the lips. Her tongue playfully stroking my teeth causing them to extend instinctively. My tongue felt her canines extend as well.

Picking up my drink I make my way over to a table that only has two chairs at it. I sit facing the stage and listen to the band tune their guitars. I think I drank the whole thing by the time the drummer began to test his setup. Tapping my right foot, I realize that this drummer can make his testing of the setup entertaining.

Now this is curious... everyone is walking off stage, except for the drummer. Now the lights are dimming. Did I miss something? In the darkness, the drummer starts a steady beat. Behind him, some lights begin to flash and alternate. His black beard and hair reflect the colored lights as they change and shine down on him and his drums. This solo of his is very... "stirring" is the only word I can think of now.

While the drummer is still playing, another guy walks on stage and picks up a red bass guitar as a light shines down on him and his Beatles-reminiscent haircut... and he starts to play a cool background rhythm.

Now a guy with wild blonde curls walks on stage and picks up a woodgrain guitar, and a light beams down upon him. He adds a characteristic rhythm to the mix.

Then a younger blonde guy, his hair cut short and neat, walks on and picks up a yellow guitar, and smiles to a lady in the audience as a light picks him out of the darkness. He adds the occasional riff to the building beat.

A wiry man, dressed in black with a black hat which has a silver ankh pinned to the front of it steps up onto the stage and grabs the standing microphone. When the light shines on him, he starts singing.

A pretty blonde in a tight black, or is it dark blue, dress steps on stage and stands by her keyboard. The light shining down on the young guitarist that she is standing next to is wide enough to illuminate them both as she starts to sway to the music. She seems to be enjoying the others before she needs to start playing the keyboard in front of her.

As the song plays out, I realize why Max loves this band. It is obvious to me that they are playing their best tonight and can taste that \$500 and the chance to move on to the finals and the big dough.

I reach into my pocket and pull out the ballot. Damn, I don't have a pen. Wasn't there one at the bar? Max smiles a knowing grin as I approach. She hands me a pen and says, "I told you so." After I finish marking an 'X' next to "The Narrow Way" on the ballot, I hand her back the pen and walk over to the ballot box to deposit my vote.

As I walk back over to the table I was sitting at before, I see a lovely redhead -- a pretty young thing. She must have gotten in with a fake ID because there's no way she can be much older than 19. She doesn't look like jailbait, but this is a 21 and over show.

Taken aback, I ask her if the seat next to her is taken -- I decide not to point out that I was just sitting there -- I may be dead, but I'm still a gentleman. She smiles and says, just loud enough, "No, please." She made eye contact and quickly broke it as her sweet smile curled into something knowingly sinister.

This must be my lucky night. Two lovely ladies, though this one was still alive. Sitting down next to her, I joined the applause for the band as they finished the first song and smoothly bridged it to the next one.

I said, "My name's Don. What's yours?"

"Jennifer. Nice to meet you, Don."

Jennifer, eh? Well, that shoots down my theory that all girls named Jennifer had to be blonde. Oh well, another conspiracy flushed down the tubes. I kissed her extended hand and said, "My pleasure." I looked into her lonely, emerald green eyes and asked, "Would you like to join me later tonight?"

I could hear her heartbeat slow down slightly as the suggestion was made. She smiled, lost in my eyes, "I'd love to, but I want to stay and hear the guys play my song."

"Your song?" I ask with curiosity.

"Well, a song named 'Jennifer's Romance'. It's my favorite and they usually close a show with it... and hopefully its fitting tonight."

"Well, I agree we should stay. This is the first time I've heard them and I'm impressed. As for the appropriateness, I certainly hope it is," I said leaning close to her so she could hear me better. Whatever perfume she's wearing has a kick to it -- I might even say I felt a spark as I leaned closer.

In that awkward moment when two people make the decision whether or not it is time for the first kiss, she appeared confident. She leaned in just a little closer letting me make the final decision. I moved in and she smiled, kissing me for the promise of romance. A closed kiss at first, we kissed again with more passion. I could feel her tongue probing around and strongly controlled the natural urge to extend the canines. I can't let her know about them... at least not yet.

Singing.
Dancing.
Kissing.

I thoroughly enjoyed the evening and had a prize on my arm to show for it. Together, Jennifer and I anxiously awaited the names of tonight's winners. When The Narrow Way was announced as the winner, genuine applause of congratulations filled the small bar.

Besides the excitement of having a talented band win, Jennifer gave me a couple more reasons to be ecstatic. She hugged me close, close enough that I could easily tell that she wasn't wearing a bra, and even gave me a soft grab from behind. I knew that she had more than romance on her mind -- but I also knew that it was the furthest thing from mine. Though if I were still human, I think I could fall in Love with her easily -- blindly mistaking Lust for Love.

Taking her hand in mine, we walked out to my car. I unlocked the passenger's side door for her and closed it after she got in. As I walked around to the driver's side I heard her unlock my door from the inside for me. After I got inside and we put on our seat belts -- yeah, old habits die hard, especially the good ones -- I turned on the headlights and started the car.

As I pulled out of the parking lot and onto the street, she noticed that my car was a convertible. She began to unbutton her blouse, top-down, and asked in a mock-innocent voice, "Can you put the top down?"

Now I don't mind the cold air, but I asked her, "The night air is cold, are you sure?"

Slowly rubbing the exposed area of her chest, she moaned, "Yes, I need something to cool me off anyway." Then she bit her lower lip.

The incredible thing is that she isn't drunk -- I made sure of that. She is here of her own free will and that only makes what I have to do tonight more pleasurable.

I agreed to retract the ragtop and engaged the mechanism. She watched the roof of my car disappear behind her and marveled at the stars in the sky. She moaned again as she thrilled to the freezing, rushing air surround her, casting her long red hair behind her. She looked heavenly as the moonlight showered her.

But it isn't divine inspiration that's encouraging her to slowly move her left hand up and down my right thigh. My foot couldn't help but add acceleration as a reflex. Of course by now I'm as hard as a rock and she noticed.

"My God..." was all she said. She took a deep breath and added, "How far away do you live?"

"Not far, Jenn. In fact, right around this corner." A mischievous grin appeared on her face as anticipation caused her to shiver.

As I pulled into my driveway, she gasped when she saw my house. It's a small two-story house with desert landscaping in the front yard. The yellow porchlight contrasts against the off-white exterior painted stucco walls.

Opening the car door for her, I noticed that two more buttons had been undone. Her blouse is loose on her now and showing a good amount of cleavage.

As I walk to my front door, she's walking behind me, rubbing my chest from behind, lightly placing kisses on my neck. I let us in and ask her to stand by the staircase. I close the door, throw the keys, my wallet, and my watch off to the side desk. I smile and ask, "May I?"

She knew what I wanted to do and I think she almost pissed her pants when I said, "I always wanted to do this." I gently sweep her off her feet, cradling her in my arms. Wrapping her arms around my neck she continues to kiss me where she left off. Cautiously, I carry her up the stairs to my bedroom.

I lay her down on my bed and slowly crawl on top of her. She's pulling my sweater and undershirt together over my head and caressing my chest as I finish the last three buttons of her blouse. Then I undo two more buttons -- those on our respective blue jeans.

Running my hands through her silky red hair as I gently kiss each and every freckle on her exposed skin. She comments on how cold I am, but I explain that away as being due to driving with the top down -- I lie and tell her she's cold, too. She's not, she's red hot -- warm blood pumping through her veins, arteries and capillaries.

I start to slip my jeans off when I feel a slight draft. I smile and say, "Jennifer... meet Max," and then roll off of her. As a look of confusion crosses her face, it's replaced by fear as Michelle materializes from mist right on top of her.

Before Jennifer has a chance to scream, Michelle covers her mouth and pins her down so she couldn't squirm away. Michelle smiles at me and says, "Hello, sugar. Did you enjoy the band?"

I smile and say, "Yeah, they were great. How did that song go? 'It wasn't her choosin' to be so beautiful...'" Then, mimicking the lead singer's dramatic pause, Max and I kiss... and then shout, "SO WHAT!" Our mutual arousal causes our fangs to emerge and we each take a bite into Jennifer. I chose her right wrist, while I left Max the treat -- the carotid artery in the neck.

Jennifer tried again to scream under Max's firm hand, but to no avail. Eventually, she became too weak to scream, to squirm... to breathe. The two of us feasted on her blood until she had none to give.

Max kissed me again and I loved the taste of blood from her lips. When she stopped, I asked her, "So, what kept you? I thought I was actually going to have to... you know..."

She made a sour face and said, "Eww, how revolting... pity seduction works so well, though. I stayed behind to get autographs from the band members."

With a smirk I admit, "Cool... OK, that's fair."

A mischievous thought crossed my mind so I said, "Well, while I've got her here I have to find out something." Michelle slipped off the dead girl and as I pulled Jennifer's jeans down I saw that she wasn't wearing underwear either.

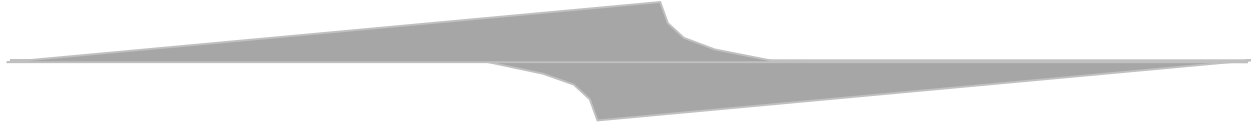
Michelle laughed and said, "Looks like she was ready for anything... too bad you found her first."

"Yeah, but this also proves my theory."

Confused, Michelle asks, "What's that?"

"That all girls named Jennifer are blondes... it must be a law or something."

Michelle laughed and then we kissed again.



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