

Through the mist he saw a woman standing on the stone bridge that spanned the river Thames. Her anguish was palpable even over the noise of the waterwheels churning nearby. Her cloak whipped about her body, pressing against her legs in the wind. She lifted her head and glanced skyward. As she did, the hood fell back revealing hair the color of dark ale, long and loose, the tips blowing up in the wind off the river. Had it not been for that, he would have turned away, but in that moment he caught her profile etched against the darkness, illuminated by the glimmer of dripping oil lamps. There was something about her profile that gripped his gaze and held it. He caught himself thinking that she looked like an angel, one hell of a thought for someone like him to entertain. Angel, indeed. A deep chuckle rumbled in his chest.

He felt the familiar stirrings of his libido. He'd had more than his share of beautiful women. Immortal though he might be, he was still a man with a man's hungers which grew ever more aggressive with the passing of each century. Unlike his mortal counterparts he did not fear his lust, nor did he feel constrained by any gentlemanly behavior to control it. Others of his kind did not limit their carnal adventures to the opposite sex. So terrible was the magnitude of their lust that they satisfied it with just about anyone. But not he. He had no taste for boys. His passion had always been for women. Blood he could obtain anywhere, but the sating of his sexual desire was a different matter. Of course, the mortal women with whom he coupled more often than not wound up dead owing to his strength and insatiable appetite for their blood. Ah well, it was, he supposed, the price they paid for inhumanly spectacular sex, a price much fairer than that which he paid for being excluded from society and the glorious light of day.

He was about to turn away, when the woman's scent drifted to where he stood in the shadow of one of the Tudor houses on the bridge. The vibrant lifeblood coursing through her veins created a familiar throb from within. She was so vital, so full of life...and blood. Her slender white throat beckoned. But he had only recently satisfied the blood lust. His face was still flushed from feeding on the footpad. Too much generally made him ill. If he had any hunger at all, it was for the meal that would be waiting for him at home of cold meats, fruit, wine, and perhaps a bit of chocolate stewed and thickened with eggs. No, it was not her blood for which he hungered. The sudden press of his phallus against his trousers aroused a different appetite.