

# **Dark Resurrection**

A novel by

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## ***Chapter One: The Reckoning***

Standing in a cemetery in the middle of the night, bored stiff guarding a tomb was not a fate the pair of Roman soldiers had considered when they enlisted in Caesar's army. Night was for sleeping, or perhaps carnal amusements at one of Jerusalem's many brothels, taverns, or dance houses. Their assignment was ridiculous – it was not an everyday occurrence that corpses would raise from their slabs after crucifixion. None had ever done so, which made the idea of guarding the tomb even more absurd, and had necessitated the drawing of straws to determine who would be charged with the dubious task of guarding a rotting cadaver.

The commander of the contubernia of eight soldiers sympathized with their plight, but insisted on the precaution to prevent fanatical followers from stealing the corpse. The directive, ordered by Procurator Pontius Pilate, struck the men and their commander as inane, for the theft of a body was not an offense considered particularly egregious, just odd, and the folks occupying Judea had always been a strange lot anyway.

The executed troublemaker had been quickly interred on a Friday afternoon by a peculiar group of individuals that boldly claimed, even as the tomb was sealed with a gigantic boulder, that Jesus of Nazareth, the dead man, would walk from the tomb in just a few days.

"If Jesus can get his ass out of there he's a better man than I am," a centurion said with a smile.

Ten muscular slaves finished seating the boulder; another group was placing mortar on the stone and rock face, closing the tomb in preparation for affixing the Imperial seal.

"He will rise Roman, we know it," a disciple named Matthew declared, staring at the soldier with anger in his eyes.

"Sure he will, get lost," retorted the centurion, waving them away.

"What if they're right sir?" an aide asked as the disciples trudged off.

"They're not fool, dead people don't rise from the grave," said the centurion, breaking into laughter.

As Saturday evening drew to a close, on their second night of duty the soldiers found their boredom almost unbearable – struggling to remain awake at their posts. Dew had formed on the sparse grass, and a light mist was descending over the graveyard. A small fire was burning near the tomb entrance to keep voracious springtime mosquitoes from devouring them while they continued in their daunting task. As it turned out, an annoyance like bloodthirsty mosquitoes would prove the least of their worries, after the risen Jesus, leaving his sepulchre, made his fateful appearance a few minutes later.

On the stroke of midnight, Jesus opened his eyes and woke from death, annoyed at having to wipe myrrh-scented oil from his face with a funereal rag. He rose from the cold slab. Feeling refreshed and rested, he was instinctively compelled to escape from the tomb. He felt much stronger than before, and found he had the incredible ability to see in total darkness. Pausing to look at his wrists and feet, Jesus noted the wounds from his beatings and crucifixion had miraculously disappeared, as had a spear wound in his right side, inflicted by another centurion after his death.

Walking about the pitch-black sepulchre, the reanimated Jesus contemplated his newfound powers and strength. He felt tremendous power surging within his body, an incredible force not of this world. He surveyed the surroundings in his hewn stone prison, determined to free himself. Feeling a slight draft coming from his right, he turned and noticed a huge boulder covering the entrance. Heading to it, he flexed his muscles, and prepared to move the stone.

Was he a god?

No.

Was he alive?

No.

Was he dead?

Not exactly.

The resurrected Jesus was neither alive nor dead. He now belonged in a netherworld of being and unbeing, a state of existence *between* life and death, transformed by an unknown power from the dead into the undead. He had risen, but his resurrection was neither good nor miraculous, for Jesus Christ had become a vampire.

With cool, pale flesh, and straw colored liquid in his veins instead of blood, the vampire Jesus pushed away the stone blocking the entrance to the tomb, breaking the seal and crushing a hapless Roman soldier to death as the gigantic boulder landed on him. Several tons of moving granite continued on, extinguishing the fire. It continued down a hillside, scattering smashed and broken tombstones in its wake. After several seconds of vibration and cacophony, the rogue boulder broke through a perimeter fence, coming to a stop after colliding with a stonework house, killing the occupants as they slept.

Calmly walking from his tomb, Jesus spied the other startled guard, staring in silent horror at the remains of his comrade. Hungry, Jesus bared fangs and sunk them deep in the neck of the terrified soldier, draining his life in seconds. He dropped the soldier to the ground and surveyed his surroundings. It was a little past midnight, in a graveyard. *Appropriate*, thought Jesus, *after all, I am a vampire.*

Finding himself surprised at that fact, or to be walking about for that matter, Jesus stepped away from his first victims, one lying on his side, devoid of blood, the other flattened like a piece of unleavened bread. Brushing his long, myrrh scented brown hair from his face, he observed a bright full moon hanging low on the horizon, noting it was late in the evening.

Tall in stature, though not an unattractive man, his Semitic features and pale but still ethnic complexion reflected his fellows, the Israelite Hebrews, with one exception – his unusual blue-gray eyes.

Realizing that his sight, hearing and sense of smell had intensified, the vampiric Christ looked about the deserted cemetery, appearing to him in full color as if brilliantly lit like midday. He turned as he heard tiniest rustle of a leaf, and smelled the sweet aroma of a blooming hibiscus from over thirty feet away.

Instinctively looking again to the sky, the sun now his only real enemy, Jesus began a leisurely walk to the house that had been his last meeting place with his disciples. Angered by the thought of his unjust crucifixion, his mind drifted to his failed ministry and the traitorous Judas Iscariot, a man he had once considered a friend. Walking through an open city gate and arriving at the humble domicile within fifteen minutes, he saw oil lamps burning in the second floor windows. He entered and climbed the stairs leading to the upper room, where two of his followers recognized and greeted him.

“Behold, I have risen,” said Jesus in strangely accented Aramaic, unlike his own voice, and very similar to the elocution used by one of his later descendants, Vlad Dracula. “Where is Peter?” he asked in a Draculaesque monotone.

“At the temple,” a nervous Thomas answered, staring at him, wondering why he should fear his friend and teacher, when he and the others had believed Jesus would rise from the dead.

“Velly good,” said Jesus, “I must go see him.” He turned and left, disappearing in an instant.

To Thomas, it appeared that Jesus had transformed into a bat, flying from an open window into

the darkness. He frowned, looked to disciple Thaddeus and said, "Something's very wrong here, I know it. Did you hear his voice?"

"Sure I did, what do you mean?"

"Are you stupid? Jesus wasn't himself at all, and I'm not staying around here to find out why!" Shaken by the sight of the undead Son of Man, Thomas headed to a closet where he had stored his belongings.

"Why not Brother Thomas, isn't he God?" asked Thaddeus, watching him gather his meager possessions.

"From what I've just seen, I doubt it. What I do know is that something is definitely wrong with that guy, so I'm making tracks, putting a lot of distance between him and me." Placing items in a satchel, he continued, "If I were you I'd disappear for parts unknown, immediately, that's what I'm going to do!"

\* \* \*

Jesus arrived at the temple, changing from bat to man in an instant. The gilded walls of the inner temple seemed somber and foreboding; dim candles in recessed wall niches used to light the stone rooms. Passing the altar, he walked up to Peter, seated in a side vestibule near the Ark of the Covenant.

"Jesus! You're alive!" Peter exclaimed, rising and walking toward his master, not knowing that the vampire's incredible powers of entrancement were taking hold upon him.

"In a way," replied Jesus in his Dracula voice, plainly refusing the warm welcome his disciple was giving him.

"You sound different master," said Peter, attempting to resist entrancement and trying to understand his stilted rebuff.

"I do?" asked Jesus, folding arms across his chest, hardly interested in how he sounded.

"Sort of," Peter stammered, asking with newfound trepidation, "Why are you here?"

"You denied me three times."

"I know master, you said I would."

"That was a sin," Jesus declared, an index finger in the air.

"Okay, I'm sorry, forgive me," said Peter, confused by Jesus' stoic injunction, his hypocrisy showing through his rote apology.

"Forgive you?" asked Jesus, reaching for his shoulders, "Why should I forgive such as you, your actions helped lead to my death!"

"Please?" asked Peter, feeling the new strength of his master, "Besides, you're not dead now, so what does it matter, your prophecy about me was fulfilled," the crowing cock crossing his mind.

"It's not that simple," said vampire Jesus, hands almost growing gentle for a moment, yet not once did the stronger than human grip lessen, "Not anymore, a new form of communion has become necessary for my forgiveness."

"What do you mean?" asked a wide-eyed Peter, in terror of the undead monster before him.

"I mean that I'm going to kill you for denying me, by sucking your blood."

"I thought you were God!"

"So did I for a while, how crass of me, but compared to you, I am a god."

Pulling Peter closer, Jesus stared in his eyes, paralyzing the disciple like a cobra moving in for the kill. For the second time in his undead existence, he bared fangs and plunged them into the

disciple's neck, draining his life from him. Moments later he dropped the corpse to the floor, exhilarated and nourished from the revenge he had taken upon Peter.

*Life is good, any life*, thought Jesus, sitting down in the vestibule while Peter lay dead on the marble floor. For several hours he sat, stroking his long beard and silently contemplating his undead existence, observing the almost decadent opulence of the Temple. It was as if he was visiting this 'House of God' for the very first time. He had been there before, but was somehow seeing it much differently as a member of the undead, disdainfully looking about at the ostentatious structure, now striking him as more of a bank for containing valuables than as a house of worship.

*I wonder what the God of the universe would need a place like this for*, thought a frowning Jesus as he rose from his seat and strolled about the deserted Temple. The wealth of a nation was melded into walls made of imported polished stone and exotic oiled woods from Lebanon. Silver, gold, and ivory inlays meandered in and around corners, with window lattices wrought in curious patterns – coming close to the forbidden practice of making depictions of living things, lest they be considered graven images. *Father was right*, he thought as he wandered the Temple, *people like these were not worth it*.

From a window he observed the horizon lightening with soft blues and pinks of the approaching dawn. Looking to his bare feet, he returned to the vestibule and removed the sandals from Peter's stiffening corpse, slipping them on before he left. For lack of a better place, Jesus returned to the cemetery, wisely choosing an unused sepulchre for safety, several tombs down from the one borrowed from Joseph of Arimathea, for protection from the sun's rays.

At dawn the relief guards arrived, calling for other soldiers after discovering the cold remains of their fellows. Using superior hearing to eavesdrop on the men carrying off his first victims, Jesus listened as they surveyed his former resting place, searching the empty tomb in an attempt to find him. Finally realizing they would get no information from a deserted tomb, the soldiers left and all was quiet.

Lurking in the shadows of a sepulchre, Jesus beheld the brilliant rays of the sun shining on the cloudless, warm spring day. During that time, he plotted his revenge against those who had crucified him. *Pilate will be first*, he thought, *then those damn Pharisees and Sadducees. After that, I'll ravage the rest of my disciples, especially Judas Iscariot, the Roman soldiers who scourged and crucified me, and anyone else who even looks at me wrong. I should also disguise my new voice, as it seems to frighten my victims*, he mused, wondering why he sounded so bizarre. Satisfied with his plans, he relaxed on a cool slab deep in the tomb, folded arms over his chest and settled into slumber.

\* \* \*

Entering the barracks during early morning, the commander beheld the crushed and mangled corpse of one guard, and the pale, chalklike pallor of the other guard's cadaver, lying in stretchers on the floor. "What the hell happened out there?" he barked at his second in command, hands on hips, his feet planted firmly one shoulder length apart in a command posture.

"We don't know sir," said the officer, "The relief guards arrived at the graveyard at sunup and found the men dead. One was crushed by the boulder, and as for the other – " He waved vaguely in the direction of his deceased comrades. His voice trailed off, looking in horror at the strange appearance of the bloodless corpse.

"Do you see his color?" asked the commander, glancing at the body.

“Yes sir,” the officer answered, “In twenty years of service, I’ve never seen anything like that!” Staring at the cadaver, he thought, *Even bodies with major arteries cut have a bit of color to them, this one’s white as a sheet!*

“Neither have I, we have to find out what killed him, and quick,” said the commander, turning to leave. “Get a physician here immediately and see what he has to say, I’m heading to the cemetery to have a look at the scene.”

“Yes sir,” answered the officer, giving the air a Roman salute that his superior had not remained for.

The commander arrived at the sunlit graveyard along with an immunes, or specialist, an engineer named Severus Germanicus, who quickly surveyed the scene, walking about the area and examining the entrance of the tomb, afterward theorizing as to what had happened.

“As I see it,” the engineer began, “It seems the stone was pushed from the inside, not pried from the outside.”

“How did you determine this?” the commander asked, folding arms over his chest.

Pausing and wiping his hands on a rag even though they were clean, the engineer felt a chill run up his spine. Cemeteries had always made him uncomfortable, a weakness he would never admit to anyone. *Give me a clean Roman cremation over these barbarian burials any day*, he thought.

“Note the path of the boulder sir,” said Severus, using a thumb to point in the direction of the destroyed house, feeling little sympathy for its deceased occupants. After all, who would be stupid enough to live next to a cemetery, even the pious priests of this god-forsaken country would not think of doing so, something about the rules of uncleanness.

“Yes,” replied the commander, observing the path of destroyed tombstones, flattened saplings and other debris leading from the opening.

“It’s practically a straight line from the entrance of the sepulchre,” the engineer continued, pointing to a line a surveyor had run from the tomb to the house. “If someone had attempted to move the stone in this fashion from the outside, it would have either crushed them to death as it moved, or else they would have pried it from the sides, and the boulder would have taken a different path.”

“I understand, but are you trying to say someone was inside the sepulchre, and pushed a stone of that weight out by himself?”

“It had to be someone inside the tomb, or perhaps some – thing,” the engineer answered with a hint of foreboding, “There’s no other way the boulder could have taken such a path.”

“You’re serious?”

“Yes sir, it would be different if we were in Rome, perhaps a lever machine similar to a siege engine could accomplish such a task there. The backward people here are not technical enough for such a feat.”

“You think so?”

“Only a Roman or Greek masterbuilder would be able to do this type of work, and even then there’d be pry marks on the boulder where it was mortared.”

“Agreed.”

“Then he’d have to remove the machine without leaving a trace, there are no forgotten tools, no dropped funereal rags, not even fresh animal dung. Aside from that sir, we still can’t account for the soldier who was crushed by the boulder, for he and his comrade would have tried to stop them.”

“True.”

“So I ask commander, how could they have made the guard stay still for the boulder to crush him to death?” asked Severus, his arms out.

“They couldn’t,” said the commander, knowing the disciplined guards would have done their duty, as there were no cowards or traitors in his command.

“Further, any such grave robbers would have needed draft oxen to haul the machine, the body and their tools away when they were finished, and there are no tracks or ruts from wheels.”

“Yes, so I suppose there’s no point in rounding up his followers for questioning?”

“You can talk to them if you want sir, but in my opinion, they had nothing to do with this,” Severus replied, frowning and looking to the open tomb.

\* \* \*

Jesus awoke at dusk, hungry for blood. Stepping from his sepulchre, he saw a young woman standing near Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb. It was a distraught Mary Magdalene, her lovely visage causing him to raise an eyebrow.

“Why do you weep woman?” asked Jesus in his disguised voice, walking to her.

“They’ve taken the master and I know not where.” She moved the hair from her tearful eyes in an unconsciously seductive manner, which was seen but ignored by the vampiric Christ. A very attractive woman, the Magdalene was of his more trying tests of self-control when he had been a preacher.

“No they haven’t, I am he,” said Jesus, staring at her neck.

“Jesus!” she exclaimed, “You’re alive!”

“No, I am far from alive,” said Jesus, “Let’s put it this way, I exist.”

“What do you mean master?” asked Mary, wiping her tears, confused by his reply, yet willing to listen and learn a new lesson from her rabbi.

“I mean I’m a vampire,” said Jesus, grabbing her by the shoulders and plunging fangs in her soft throat. She gave a short muffled cry like that of a small animal injured, collapsing in his arms. He sucked her blood, but not enough to kill her, as he had always thought this dark haired, green eyed, Jewish – Benjaminite prostitute attractive, and had actually loved her deeply when alive. During his ministry, he had greatly enjoyed her company, her beautiful smile and past seductive glances crossing his mind while he beheld her unconscious body; even her sharp wit and intelligence had drawn him to her from the beginning. He gently placed her in a recessed corner in his sepulchre and walked to Jerusalem, heading to the home of procurator Pontius Pilate.

Mary Magdalene would recover quickly, accompanying her master Jesus to Anatolia and later to the continent of Europe, traveling with him as a vampire.

In Jerusalem, a party and sex orgy was being held at the Pilate residence, a gigantic pearlescent marble structure located in the downtown section of the city. Arriving, Jesus strolled through the open bronze clad doors, noting the debauchery, several couples openly having intercourse on cushions placed on the marble floor. Standing near a hall entrance to the atrium, two men, one a praetor, the other a consul, noticed Jesus. Finding him attractive, they approached and propositioned him.

“A lovely party isn’t it friend?” asked the consul, looking to Jesus.

“I suppose,” Jesus answered in Latin, instinctively knowing them for what they were.

“You’re a beautiful man, I think I’m falling in love with you this very moment,” said the consul, batting eyes sensually at him.

“Indeed,” said Jesus, hiding his disdain from the future victim.

“He’s a Hebrew Urbanus, those like him trim the prepuces of their phalli so the head protrudes even when unaroused,” said the praetor, named Carinus, having had homosexual encounters with many inhabitants of Judea.

“I must see this wonder for myself,” a smiling Urbanus declared, looking to Jesus’ crotch.

A disgusted Jesus, seeing them as nothing more than food, played along, the three moving to a secluded storeroom for their fateful encounter. Closing and locking the door, the Romans disrobed, fully aroused.

“Why aren’t you naked friend, remove your robe and undergarments so we can love each other,” said Urbanus, staring at Jesus’ crotch while caressing his forearm.

Revolted by the sight of his nude homosexual suitors, Jesus answered, “Because I’m hungry, not queer, and I’m going to kill both of you.”

“Surely you jest,” said a smiling Carinus, falling into Jesus’ arms for what he thought would be a prelude for rough sex.

“No, I’m a vampire and I need your blood to survive,” Jesus replied, fangs showing as he held the enraptured man, not quite realizing how depraved he was.

“Love me to death with your stiff and conquering phallus,” Carinus cooed, kissing Jesus on the cheek, his reason clouded by his arousal.

“Certainly not,” retorted Jesus, staring into the victim’s eyes.

Not wanting to hear more lewd proposals, he hypnotized Carinus, but Urbanus, a rare, mentally inflexible man incapable of entrancement, realizing he was in mortal danger, attempted to flee. Moving quickly, Jesus appeared in the doorway, blocking his escape. Lifting him bodily, he broke the consul’s back with his bare hands, placing him in a sitting position, still alive, near the door. The horrified, frozen praetor could only watch as the vampire bared fangs and knelt down to suck Urbanus’ blood, plunging razor sharp incisors in his throat. Disposing of the troublesome man, Jesus then slaughtered Carinus, draining the life from him in seconds.

“Silly queers,” said a smirking Jesus, holding the nude body of Carinus. Refreshed by the nourishing blood, he dropped the corpse to the floor and left the room, closing the door behind him.

“Where the hell’s Pilate?” he spat, looking about the opulent reception hall. Told by a Gallic slave that Pilate was having sex with a set of twins in the central courtyard, he headed there.

Appalled at the scene he observed, Jesus yelled, “Hey, shithead!”

Pilate was leaning on a trellis in ecstasy, a naked blonde slave rapidly fellating him.

“Jesus Christ!” Pilate exclaimed, standing up and pulling his suddenly flaccid organ from the girl’s mouth as the vampire approached.

“That’s me,” said Jesus, enjoying the sight of Pilate’s fear.

Pilate had turned as white as his disheveled equestrian toga, beholding the late Son of Man. “It can’t be you, you’re dead!”

“It is, and I am undead, thank you,” said Jesus, looking in disgust at the much shorter Pilate and his slaves, the girls cringing and attempting to cover their nude bodies with their arms.

“Why are you here?” asked a shaking Pilate, arranging his toga, trying to gain some control of the situation.

“You condemned me to death on the cross,” said Jesus in his strangely accented voice, staring into Pilate’s eyes.

“No I didn’t, I tried to stop them! All those Jews wanted you dead, what could I do?”

“You didn’t try hard enough,” Jesus answered, entrancing Pilate and the two slaves.

He killed them by sucking their blood, dropping the emptied bodies to the ground. Pausing, he ogled the bodies of the nude girls in disgust, lifting one by a leg, noting while looking closer at the body that she had been only a child, not even having pubic hair.

***Better to be dead than to live a life like that,*** thought Jesus, staring at the lifeless body of the other child slave.

Frowning, he threw the corpse into a fountain thirty feet away, the body bouncing off a bronze statue of Venus and landing in the water with a tremendous splash. A surprised Jesus raised eyebrows at the superhuman feat, not recalling he had easily moved the huge boulder blocking the entrance to the tomb, his physical strength having increased over tenfold.

“What a pervert,” he muttered, looking to Pilate’s remains, the body having a chalklike pallor, contemplating the man’s unsuccessful defense of his actions. Thinking further, he conceded Pilate might have had a point. “Oh well,” he added with a shrug, staring at the bloodless body, knowing it was much too late for a reprieve.

Seeing a silver goblet filled with perfumed wine on a table, Jesus paused to take a delicate sip. It wasn’t his particular brand, but found the taste of the fermented nectar quite palatable. “I can still enjoy wine,” he said with a smile, emptying the goblet. Grabbing the bottle, nearly full, he corked it and slipped it in his robe.

Bloated with blood, he moved past the oblivious guests, occupied with their debauchery, and left the ostentatious mansion. Nauseous, he staggered a few blocks down the street, entering a local lavatorium. ***I suppose there’s a limit to the blood I can consume, just like with wine,*** he thought, leaning over the basin, vomiting excess blood into the sewer. Comfortable and sated, he left the lavatorium and walked about Jerusalem, taking in the sights, making way to his tomb near sunrise.

Mary Magdalene sat in undead repose in a corner, her unconscious body transforming into a vampire. ***I imagine it’ll take a few days for her to wake up,*** thought Jesus, looking to the comatose Magdalene as he removed the bottle from his robe. Pulling the stopper with his teeth, he spat it to the floor and took a deep gulp of undiluted wine. “Not bad,” he observed with satisfaction, finding the fermented nectar quite tasty. He finished it, soon finding he had become a delightfully inebriated vampire. Back in his mortal days, he and many of his followers had been, for all practical purposes, alcoholics, often getting drunk together while discussing religious philosophy. Deeply satisfied with the wonderful revelation that he could still enjoy wine, Jesus lay down on a slab, closed his eyes, and settled into blissful sleep.

\* \* \*

Rising at dusk, he found to his surprise that Mary Magdalene had risen before him. She was sitting on a slab, staring at her burned and blistered arms.

“Master, what has happened to me?” she asked in a frightened voice, “I tried to walk outside and it felt like I was on fire!”

“Verily I say unto you,” said Jesus in his vampire voice, “I’ve brought you to the realm of the undead: you are now a vampire, and cannot walk upon the earth while the sun shines. Incidentally Mary, just call me Jesus,” he added, sitting up on his slab.

“A vampire!” she exclaimed, raising a hand in surprised horror to her pale cheek, “Jesus Christ, is this your idea of eternal life?”

“It is now,” said Jesus, stepping to the floor, “The only downside is you have to avoid the sun, oak stakes, and prolonged contact with fire. That’s not too bad, considering you’ll live forever if

you avoid things like that in the future. Oh yes, I almost forgot, you have to suck blood every night too.”

“Blood? That’s disgusting, I can’t do that!”

“Human blood, and you must imbibe or you will truly die,” Jesus replied, correcting her.

“Don’t worry Mary, it’ll come natural, I’ll teach you, after all, I’m a teacher.”

“This isn’t life, it’s a living death,” said a frowning Magdalene.

“You may have a point there, but it beats being truly dead doesn’t it?” asked Jesus, leaning against the wall of the tomb, staring out at the graveyard.

“Why did you do this to me?” she asked, hands on her hips.

“Why?” asked Jesus, feeling that if he did not answer her honestly, he would lose her forever. He looked her in the eyes. “Mary, I was foolish not to take what you offered me in life, you have always been very dear to me, and I wanted you to be with me.”

“Are you trying to say you love me?”

“Yes, I do love you woman,” said an embarrassed Jesus, avoiding her gaze and looking to the entrance of their tomb.

“Why the hell didn’t you tell me earlier?”

“Why, well, I uh…” Jesus stammered, his voice trailing off.

Mary Magdalene looked at Jesus and wondered why she had never seriously tried to seduce him; the opportunity had come her way many times. Now perhaps he would be hers, but she knew that regardless of his serene exterior, he could so easily be hurt. She swallowed the harsh words she had, vowing to keep them to herself. “Well my love, I suppose this does beat death, and why does your voice sound so weird?”

“Damn it all,” said Jesus, even as he felt his heart lift at the words of his beloved Magdalene, “I have to remember to disguise my voice.”

“Do I sound like that?” she asked, who two thousand years in the future would still kid him for occasionally sounding like Bela Lugosi.

“No, you sound just as you did in the past,” Jesus answered, “That’s strange, I imagine only some of us have this problem.”

“It is a problem,” said Mary with a wry smile, “You sound goofy.”

Caressing her cheek with a finger, Jesus asked, disguising his voice, “Is this better?”

“Much.”

They stepped from their tomb into the night.

“It’s bright, like the day,” she marveled, looking to Jerusalem, seeing flickering light from street torches. In some areas, it had turned the stone and stucco buildings a warm bronze color.

“Yes,” said Jesus, looking to his lovely consort, smiling at the good fortune of having her with him. “Your sight has changed so you can see in the dark. You won’t miss the day, and we’ll have thousands of nights to enjoy, more than all the days of Methuselah and then some.”

“Did God give us this?” she asked, looking to Jesus, wondering what other delights there could be for them to share.

“Who knows,” said Jesus as they headed across the cemetery, “I’m not sure; frankly, after what I went through last Friday, I don’t think there is a God, at least not one who cares about the affairs of man.”

“Where are we going?” she asked, relieved that he was not going to go off and start another ministry.

“To visit old friends.”

“Who?”

“The Pharisees and Sadducees at the Temple.”

“Oh,” the Magdalene replied, her quick mind comprehending, “I get it, revenge, right?”

“Exactly,” said Jesus, determined to slaughter the evil Joseph Caiaphas and his minions by sucking their blood.

“Do you think my burned arms will get better?”

“Of course woman, look at them.”

To her amazement, her arms were quickly healing, returning to their normal appearance. They headed into the city and toward the Temple complex, enjoying the coolness of the early evening.

In the Temple council chamber, an ostentatious room lined with polished stone benches covered in costly cushions, various robed hypocrites, disguised as Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots, sat debating about Hebrew law, the vileness of pork, the terrible Romans, and of how Jesus of Nazareth had been the son of Satan, not God.

“Yeah, but he’s disappeared from his tomb and Pilate’s dead, along with his praetor!” exclaimed Abram Ben-Joshua, a Benjaminite Zealot who had demanded Jesus’ death. “His guards found his body in the mansion courtyard with two of his slaves.”

“Perhaps it was robbers, murdering him for lucre,” said Baruch Zion, adversary of Sadducee Caiaphas in their struggle for power.

“I don’t think so Baruch,” Abram replied, “Soldiers found the men guarding the sepulchre dead as well, and the boulder blocking the entrance is sitting half a stadia from the grave, smashed through the side of a house. Something strange is going on, and we’d best be on the lookout for that Levite bastard Jesus.”

“Come on Abe, do you really think he climbed out of the tomb on his own?” the wicked Caiaphas asked, High Priest who had demanded death for the self-proclaimed Son of Man. “The man was crucified, he died, and dead he will stay. The explanation is simple; his disciples dragged his stinking carcass from the graveyard so they could say he rose from the dead.”

“Probably,” agreed a young Benjaminite Pharisee, named Saul of Tarsus.

“What does it take to get through to you, Caiaphas?” asked Abram, pointing to the vestibule, “Sunday morning a scribe found one of his disciples, Simon Peter, dead – back there!”

“You’re saying Jesus did it?” asked Caiaphas, hiding his glee at their apparent foolishness, his judgment clouded by blind ambition. ***He would indeed go higher in the temple with these fools saying a dead man had risen from the grave,*** thought the Sadducee, they would be seen as insane and removed from their positions by Herod Antipas and the Temple elders.

Then he could assume the position he had coveted for so long – sole blessed treasurer of the valuable sin gifts to the temple, a job that would allow him to embezzle untold sums of silver shekels for his personal use. For had he not learned as a child to misdirect and mislead from his childhood nurse, a woman who had slept with his father for years – the vicious Jezebel still ruling his father’s house with impunity, thanks to forbidden favors she gave him that his mother never would.

“I don’t know Caiaphas, but they say Thomas and another disciple saw him Sunday and fled for parts unknown,” said Abram, unaware that he and his fellows were playing into the hands of an unknown enemy – the greedy, amoral Caiaphas. “Thomas may have been a member of Jesus’ group, but he isn’t stupid. A man who knows both of us swears Thomas was scared to death when he saw him, and suspects he has returned as a vampire, bent on revenge.”

“A vampire, and who are ‘they?’” asked Caiaphas, smirking.

“A Roman writer named Gaius Plinius Celer and Grania Marcella his wife,” Abram answered. “They are lodged at Issachar’s hotel with their young son Pliny.”

"I know who you're talking about," Shadrach Bar-Judah replied, another Pharisee who had demanded the death of Jesus. "He's the guy who wants to write an encyclopedia of history, using that prodigy son of his as a scribe to record events around the empire."

"You're kidding," said a frowning Caiaphas, shaken by what he heard. "Gaius Celer is a man of letters, well educated, and I know him too." He rose to his feet and added, "Excuse me brethren, I'm heading to the hotel to hear firsthand what he has to say."

"I'm coming with you," Saul of Tarsus declared, rising from his softly covered stone bench.

Both left the temple as Jesus approached, these men forever escaping his wrath. The Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots resuming in their discussion, Jesus and Mary silently climbed the temple stairs, entering the council chamber, confronting most of the holy men who had condemned the gentle preacher to death.

Abram looked up and said, "So, Thomas of Capernaum was right, you have risen, surely you are the Son of God."

"I don't know about that anymore," said Jesus, pausing and looking to his consort. The Magdalene's instincts were awakening, she staring hungrily at their necks, sharp fangs emerging from her gums for the first time. "But there's one thing I do know," he added, turning to the assemblage of hypocrites.

"What is that Rabbi?" asked Shadrach.

"That I'm going to kill all of you, for killing me," said Jesus, entrancing and freezing them to their spots.

Six Hebrew fanatics met their end, as the Son of Man, a vampire, and his consort, Mary the Magdalene, dropped the bodies to the floor, she wiping her mouth on the robe of one victim.

Jesus sat down on a couch, belched loudly and remarked, "See, it wasn't that bad was it?"

"No, but I feel bloated," said Mary, rising from the cooling cadavers, rubbing her distended stomach.

"Two or three seems to be the limit, and you're rather small," Jesus replied, watching her move her hand. "If you like we can go to a lavatorium and purge the excess."

"I need to; thank you Jesus, you're still a wonderful teacher," she answered politely, smiling in gratitude. Jesus nodded, embarrassed at her extolations.

They left the Temple and headed to a lavatorium, where Mary vomited half of her hemoglobin supper into the sewers of Jerusalem.

"Would you like to see the city at night, it's beautiful," said Jesus, while Mary leaned over the basin, wiping coagulating blood from her mouth.

"I'd love to," replied his smiling consort, sensing the blooming romance between her and Jesus, a man she had been deeply in love with for several years.

They strolled Jerusalem for hours, hand in hand, enjoying their surroundings, agreeing the Romans were probably the best thing that ever happened to Judea, with their villas, plumbing, aqueducts and sewerage systems. The main streets lit by torchlight, the beauty of the golden stonework and slightly darker concrete masonry gave the deserted streets an amber hue.

As the sky began to lighten, Jesus said, "We'd best head to our tomb woman."

"Do you have to put it that way?" the Magdalene asked, facing him with arms around his waist. She hoped that in time he would understand that romance was an art form, as much as seduction or dancing, and like all art, it had to be practiced, even if she had to help him.

Jesus looked to the beautiful, raven-haired vampiress and replied, "No my dear Mary, perhaps a better word would be our home." He kissed her passionately, the Magdalene overwhelmed by his embrace, her body nearly growing limp.

“What’s wrong, my woman?” asked Jesus, holding her in his arms.  
“Oh, nothing, I just love you, that’s all,” said Mary, feeling flushed.  
“And I love you Mary, I have always loved you,” said Jesus, taking her hand in his.  
*Maybe he does understand*, she thought, smiling and strolling beside him toward the sepulchre, hand in hand.

\* \* \*

Jesus Christ still had scores to settle, fires of revenge burning within his tormented mind. Awakened the following evening, he told Mary of his intent to destroy his disciples. “Judas Iscariot’s the one I really want,” he said, his eyes narrowed in contempt, “I’ve disposed of Peter, but I have to get that traitorous Judas. He’s worse than Peter ever was and he must not escape me.”

“Why’d you kill Peter, I thought he was your friend.”

“He was my friend, but he denied me three times.”

“You actually killed him for that?”

“Maybe I did screw up there woman, but I was rather angry that night.”

“And you’re not angry now?” asked Mary, stifling a laugh, looking to her frowning consort.

“I am to a degree, but I must dispose of friend Judas nevertheless,” said Jesus, realizing his slaughter of Peter was perhaps unjustified.

“You’ll get him, he was hanging around the Temple the past few days before you turned me,” Mary replied, not pressing further regarding Peter. “I imagine he’s looking for more money. John told me Saturday that Judas plans to sell out Lucius the Christ next, for 60 pieces of silver.”

Only in the game for lucre and earthy glory, the cynical, traitorous Judas Iscariot had been paid off amply by the high priests in Tyrian tetradrachmae to betray his innocent friend Jesus, the amount given him considered a small fortune in those days.

“What an asshole,” said Jesus, slipping into his vampire voice, “Lucius Christ is a liar and charlatan, I’m the real Christ, and that bastard Judas sold me out for only 30 pieces of silver!”

“Brother John said the same thing.”

“John is a good man; I’ll spare him,” Jesus declared, disguising his voice.

“The other disciples believed in you too,” said Mary, hoping to blunt his maniacal desire for vengeance.

“Thomas doesn’t anymore.”

“Who cares, lots of people don’t believe in you – you can’t kill them all.”

“Quite true, but I must destroy Judas Iscariot.”

“I agree,” said Mary, “He deserves it; incidentally, do you have any idea where he’s been spending most of his time since betraying you?”

“Not really, considering I was dead until recently. I suppose he’s living high in the saddle, letting all that blood money burn a hole in his pocket.”

“You guessed part of it, but get this, he’s spent a lot of it at a brothel I used to work at.”

“He used it to buy whores?”

“Yes.”

“What vermin he is, verily I say, I never trusted him; Judas is as slippery as a bucket of eels,” said Jesus, his accent returning.

“Jesus, your voice.”

“Of course, thank you Mary,” said Jesus, disguising his voice.

Leaving the cemetery, they headed into the cool spring night in search of Judas Iscariot. Arriving at the brothel entrance, Jesus noted business was brisk; the place was packed. By torchlight, pictures painted on the walls in brilliant colors graphically illustrated the services provided and the cost of each in Roman currency.

“You’ll have to wait friend,” said a pimp at the door, holding up hands. “All the girls are busy with other customers.”

“I’m not looking for a girl,” Jesus replied.

“Oh,” said the smirking pimp, “We don’t do that here, but my brother Ephraim on the next block –”

*Dear Jesus, do you have a lot to learn,* thought Mary, stifling a sudden fit of giggles his innocence had incurred.

Jesus ignored the insult and said, “No sir, I’m not looking for men either. As you can see I have my woman, I’m looking for a friend that frequents here.”

“Sorry, what’s the name?” the pimp asked.

“Judas Iscariot.”

“I know him, he’s in back,” said the pimp, pointing the way with a jerk of a thumb, pleased that Judas was telling friends about the expert abilities of the ladies in his charge.

“Take me to him.”

“Perhaps we should wait till he’s finished with Adria,” said the pimp, not wanting to lose business, after all, a patron would not return to his brothel if he didn’t get his money’s worth.

“That won’t do, take me to him now,” Jesus ordered, staring into the pimp’s eyes. The entranced pimp obediently led them to the rear of the brothel.

“You do that well,” Mary whispered into his ear, “Will you teach me?”

“You’ll learn in time.”

The pimp stopped at a door, pointed, and walked away.

“What do we do now?” asked Mary.

“Watch, I intend to have fun with this guy.”

“Yeah, but I’m getting hungry.”

“Take the whore after we enter, but leave Judas to me.”

“Okay.”

The sounds of sexual pleasure were coming from the small room, the voice clearly that of Judas Iscariot. Jesus pushed the door down with one arm and entered, standing on the broken door. Judas turned and leapt from the sheets, leaving a frightened Adria naked on the bed.

Mary moved for the whore, Jesus blocking her path. “Hold on girl, you’ll get her in a minute.”

“Jesus!” a terrified Judas cried, beholding the risen Son of Man.

“In the flesh.”

“Master, I can explain,” said Judas.

“That would prove interesting my friend, but I don’t feel there is any need,” Jesus replied.

Always a liar, the treacherous Judas was trying to buy time, moving for a sharp dagger concealed in his robe. He found it, pulled it out and plunged it deep into the vampiric Christ’s chest, waiting to run after he fell. To Judas’ surprise, Jesus smiled and pulled the 8-inch dagger from his chest, dropping it to the floor.

“You’ll have to do better than that,” retorted Jesus, chuckling at the horrified Judas. Turning from him, he looked to the naked whore, and said in his accented voice, “Take her Mary, we have other things to do!”

The Magdalene moved like lightning, plunging fangs deep and sucking her dry in seconds.

“Come, my friend Judas,” ordered Jesus, having entranced his betrayer during his consort’s attack. Judas, wishing he could resist, obeyed. He led Judas and Mary from the brothel, out of the city and into the countryside near their sepulchre. Like a zombie, Jesus stood the betrayer near a stunted olive tree, sitting down on a stone with the Magdalene.

“What are you going to do with him?” she asked, hands folded in her lap.

“I haven’t decided, but it’s definitely going to be painful.”

“Why not hang him?”

“No, that’s much too easy, besides, we haven’t any rope.”

“How about torturing him to death, that’s a good idea isn’t it?”

“Perhaps,” Jesus answered, staring at his terrified victim.

“You know,” said the Magdalene, “When I was a whore, Judas beat the hell out of me at the brothel one day. When he’s drunk he has a mean streak toward women, he really got a kick out of beating my head against a wall.”

“Really? Then perhaps you should beat his head against that tree. After all, is it not written, even from the time of Hammurabi: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?”

“But I thought you wanted to kill him.”

“You can kill him if you like, I don’t care, just do it slowly,” said Jesus with a wave of a hand. She headed to the olive tree, intending to beat the traitor’s skull against its thick trunk.

“Why are you doing that?” asked Jesus, Mary reaching for Judas’ head.

“What do you mean?” she asked, confused by his question, her hand held high, stopped before she could grab a handful of hair.

“Use your mind; make him beat his head against the tree. I’ll release him to you so you can try it.”

“We can do that?” she asked, walking over and sitting on the stone, ready to learn from her undead rabbi.

“With practice, give it a try; you seem more vicious than I am anyway.”

Mary concentrated and found her entrancement power came easily. She forced Judas to slam his head against the tree until he was nearly unconscious, his face and scalp a bloody pulp. Satisfied with his consort’s talent at torture, Jesus walked over to Judas. He ran a finger across the blood-covered forehead and put it in his mouth, enjoying the taste. He lifted the tortured body with one arm, raising his betrayer into the air.

“You greedy bastard,” Jesus spat in his vampiric accent, “Verily I say, those like you make our people look bad! You sold me out, fornicating in a brothel as they crucified me!” The terrified Judas, weak and with a severe concussion, was unable to say anything in defense, even if he had been able to think of one, his forced delirium numbing the pain somewhat. Disgusted, he dropped Judas to the ground in a crumpled heap.

“Is he dead?” asked Mary.

“Not yet, but I’m sure he wishes he was,” said Jesus, walking to the stone and sitting down.

“Can we make him make him beat his head some more or is he too tired to do that?”

“Tired or not, we could make him beat his head against that tree until he died from the blows, but I think the whole affair is getting boring,” a chuckling Jesus replied.

“What else can we make him do?” asked Mary, lying on her side on the large stone, resting her head on her right arm.

“Anything as long as he’s alive, it’s as if he were a puppet.”

“Can I make him dance?”

“Easily, but what will that accomplish?”

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