

The Draculan Hunter

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Chapter 1

Kelly Harper wanted to find a special guy, but it was the creepy ones who she tended to date. She was a sucker for a sad story, and she lent out money too. She saw a loser sitting at the bar stool nursing the same drink for three hours and she told herself she would resist the urge to pay for his drink. He seemed nice. But her sister told her they all start out nice and then they end up being rotten so you have to end it. What did Leola know anyway? She divorced her second husband for the second time and was dancing with a guy wearing a cowboy hat in eighty-five-degree weather.

It was a hot night for September. The bar would be closing soon. She decided the stranger at the bar might be an accountant, or some other decent guy so she decided instead of buying him a drink she'd strike up a conversation.

Kelly pulled her hair back for a minute then she adjusted her dress. She licked her lips. It wasn't like she was getting any younger so why not speak to him? It wasn't her modus operandi. She hated going out. The soup kitchen where she worked drained all her energy and only when her sister needed her company did she go out.

The stranger was hunched over. She glanced back at the dance floor and Leola and Mr. Cowboy were kissing. She guessed she'd take a taxi home. Then she glanced back at the man. He looked sideways as she approached the bar.

"What'll you have?"

"Sloe Gin Fizz."

"Seriously? You're like thirty something."

"Just get me a drink!"

"Okay."

The bartender grabbed a bottle off the top shelf. The stranger smiled and Kelly thought it was the perfect time to say something. He was good looking in a Kirk Douglas sort of way. He was medium build but she thought he had more muscles than normal. Maybe he was an athlete.

The bartender approached. "Here you go. Seven fifty-six."

"Keep the change."

"Thanks."

Kelly sipped the drink as she decided what to say. Then she moved past three women who were ordering drinks and sat down in the empty stool next to the stranger.

"Kind of hot weather," Kelly said.

"Yes it is."

"I think it will be a disappointment when the heat finally breaks."

"Probably."

"I'm Kelly."

"Hello. I'm Liam. Liam Abraham."

"Nice to meet you. It's almost closing and I must confess that I'm a people watcher. I noticed that you seemed lost in thought most of the night."

He smiled.

"Oh. Forgive me if I've intruded on your privacy."

"No, It's quite all right." He rubbed his fingers over the rim of his glass. "I'm a bit preoccupied by my profession at the moment."

"Are you an Accountant?"

"No. I'm an... Insurance Agent."

Kelly brightened at the news. He had a job.

"Listen, I don't mean to be forward, but I like you. Is it too weird to think it so soon after meeting someone?" Kelly said.

"Not at all. I was thinking that I like you too. You have a straight forward quality about you..."

Kelly looked towards the door and glanced to her sister who was about to leave. Leola motioned to her. "Excuse me please."

She went over to Leola and the anger flared. The dance music drummed on as her feet stuck to the beer soaked floor.

"Hey. Jake is taking me back to his place. Will you be okay?" Leola said.

"You met him yesterday. Don't you think you should wait until the judge signs the paper before you

start with another man?"

"I divorced Jim twice. He doesn't care. I mean his girlfriend would be thrilled that I'm not calling him up and asking him to come home."

"You're not really at the best place right now. Are you sure about this cowboy?"

"He is just so sweet. Are you okay? I see you're talking to Red."

"His name is Liam."

"Great. Does he work a real job?"

"Yes, Insurance."

"Good enough. So, we're square?"

Kelly glanced at the door where her sister's date was waiting. "Yes."

Leola kissed her.

Kelly watched them leave. Then she took out her phone and called a taxi. The sweat was collecting on her forehead and so she wiped it away.

She turned to see Liam Abraham standing next to her.

"Listen, Kelly. It was good to meet you. I'm giving you my business card." Liam took out of his wallet a card and handed it to her. "If you'd like, we could set up an appointment and talk over your insurance needs."

Kelly glanced down and scanned the card. "Sure. What type of insurance do you sell?"

"Life. Nice to meet you."

She watched him exit right behind her sister and the cowboy. She was sure she'd be alone for the rest of her life.

Chapter 2

"A witching hour a witching hour so many mouths to feed and death relieves the hunger," Amwolf Van Horn said.

Sigman Van Horn answered, "Do you have to say it? It's so 1350's. I mean get with the twenty-first century."

"You think we're the only Draculans who survived the middle ages? Everybody learned that nursery rhyme," Amwolf said.

"Yes, because it's stupid. It takes three bites before a human becomes a Draculan, so it's a myth about there being too many of us...well after the black plague there was those hundred years when we had to ration how much blood we drank...but then again, I thought that was a legend," Sigman said.

"Don't get me started with our kind's history," Amwolf complained.

"Tell me that story--"

"No brother dear. You never paid attention to anything Father told you. Vampires legends were spread to protect us." Amwolf began to tap his foot.

"It's such a slur to use that term, don't," Sigman said.

"I forgot you cared so much about it. Okay, okay, Draculans," Amwolf said.

"Thank you."

"Oh, here's a group now. Time for dinner."

"I hate Philadelphia girls, south side. They taste like garlic," Sigman complained.

"Now, now, talk about stereotypes...it's a healthy thing, you tend to pack on the pounds anyway. Remember Atlanta?" Amwolf said.

"Oh yeah. Twenty girls on Friday the thirteenth. Wow. I had to diet for six weeks to fit into my pants," Sigman complained.

"I'm telling you. You should try men. It's less fattening," Amwolf said.

"Lean muscles. But I'm saying the girls taste better."

"I'm just telling you...oh, time to party."

A group of four girls walked along the buildings outside the club.

"You mean pig out," Sigman said.

Sigman wiped his mouth. It was refreshing to be satisfied again. The girls, lying on the grimy ground, were nearly dead.

Amwolf pulled a man from the sidewalk and dragged him to the back corner of the alley. Sigman watched his brother for a minute and heard the man pleading for him to let go of his neck. He knew Amwolf's meals would not suffer because his brother was a compassionate Draculan. He, on the other hand, liked the hunt almost as much as the meal.

The girl Sigman spied standing at the corner was thin. He supposed even after his second one, a thin one wouldn't make him pack on the pounds. He left the shadows of the alley and walked along the boulevard.

It was late and the crowds were beginning to fizzle out. If he wanted the girl, he better hurry. He walked up to her. He stood six feet and his dark hair and hypnotic dark eyes alone didn't attract the ladies. Usually he took off his shirt to show off his six-pack abs. It was hot enough so he peeled off his shirt. He walked up behind her.

"You seem lost. May I help you?" Sigman said.

Kelly Harper turned around and saw the great looking shirtless man. She laughed.

Sigman didn't expect that response.

Kelly put her hand over her mouth. She said, "I'm sorry, it's been one of those nights. I suppose there's a reason you're walking around half-naked?"

"Yes, it's hot. Would you like a ride home?"

"No thanks, buddy. My cab will be here any minute so move along," Kelly said.

Sigman was angry. He said, "If you only knew who I am you'd treat me with greater care. I could make it painless for you or make it hurt for days before I put an end to you."

Kelly moved away from him and turned toward the club. She began to run but the shirtless man appeared right in front of her as if by magic. She screamed and he pulled her close. She looked at him as he kissed her. Kelly wanted to resist but his kiss was intoxicating. She knew she should run, yet she felt powerless. Kelly knew she wouldn't make it out alive if she went with him, and yet he kissed her again and she stopped struggling.

"Come with me, and we will share a wonderful memory," Sigman said.

Kelly nodded. They walked together down the alley and he continued his advances as she was too hypnotized to think clearly. Kelly was too weakened by some power he had over her. She was sure he would take advantage of her, but instead he touched her neck. He massaged it and she bent back as if she weren't in control of herself. He kissed her neck as she thought that she should scream. No sound came out as he put something sharp into it. If she could move she would have, but her body felt paralyzed. Did he cut her? It was razor sharp only the pain was dull. She felt him suck on her neck and then she heard another voice.

"Let me try! She looks so yummy! Don't drain her. Leave me some!" Amwolf said.

Sigman looked up at his brother, wiped his mouth and said, "You always were a selfish brat that Mother spoiled rotten. Can't I have a meal in peace?"

"No. I can tell the way you're slurping like a pig she's good. I want her too."

"I'm keeping her for myself. You've had three and she's my third. Go find another guy," Sigman said.

"Hello?" A male voice echoed down the alleyway.

Amwolf looked at the man who was getting close to Kelly.

"This is too easy. Hello yourself," Amwolf said.

The man looked familiar to Kelly. He was the insurance salesman. Kelly felt her neck as the man who bit her looked at the insurance salesman. She felt wetness and she couldn't move. She was a rag doll in the stranger's arms.

"I think you should let go of the girl," the insurance man said.

Amwolf laughed hard.

Sigman said, "Why would I listen to you?"

The man named Liam lunged at Amwolf and slashed his arm. Kelly felt herself being let go and she felt her body crumple to the ground. She was a dropped rag doll on the side of a cement alleyway. She knew the blood was draining from her wounds on her neck and she was blacking out.

Chapter 3

Kelly opened her eyes and she saw a hospital room. She looked at the IV bag. She recalled feeling like she would perish somehow, but she couldn't recall why she was so afraid. Kelly rang for the nurse. The white walls and machines with tubes streaming out made her nervous. She hated hospitals. The ammonia smell and the starchy pillow were the least of her problems as she felt a sharp pain in her neck. Her hand trembled as she touched the bandage.

A stout woman with dark hair knocked on her door. "You're awake."

"Yes, but I don't know what happened. Why am I here?"

The nurse took her blood pressure. The squeezing of her arm made her nervous.

"Don't you remember the attack? You're the only survivor."

"No, I don't remember anything. All I can recall is that I went with my sister to the bar and then took a cab home."

"Ms. Harper, you were slashed with a razor on your right carotid artery and right internal jugular vein. You're lucky to be alive. It was a precise nick and had you not been rushed here, you would have bled to death. It was touch-and-go for a while. You're type O blood, and we had to scramble to get you enough blood so fast," the nurse said.

"How long have I been here?" Kelly asked.

"Two days. You were unconscious when the gentleman brought you to the hospital."

"Wait a minute, tell me again?"

"Your friend. He stayed with you for hours before he left. I assumed...is he your boyfriend?"

"No, I just met him."

"He carried you into the emergency room. The police showed up to interview him, and he gave a statement. He was the reason you survived -- the fact that he got you to us so quickly. I don't know how he did it, maybe he had an adrenaline rush or something to be strong enough to carry you. Five people died in the attack. The police think it was ritualistic slayings."

"Devil worship?"

"Something like it."

"And I'm the only survivor?" Kelly asked.

"Yes. I'm sure the police will want to talk to you about what you know."

"I can't remember anything."

Amwolf Van Horn pulled the shades of the one room studio apartment. Sirens echoed through the alley. The studio apartment had a brick wall that highlighted the old building's past. A bike was parked between the television and the couch. The hour was very late, and the breaking daylight was completely blocked by the room darkening shade.

Sigman Van Horn pulled the beds down from the wall. He stretched and yawned.

"I'm beat. I think I could sleep for at least a week," Sigman said. He lay on his twin bed as his brother sat down on the other. "I wish the apartment was larger. I miss my coffin."

"It would never fit in the apartment...the bed isn't so bad," Amwolf said.

"It's just so open. I miss the comfort of a confined space. I barely sleep," Sigman said.

"I hear you snoring. You must be getting some sleep," Amwolf said. "You really messed up. We were almost cut."

"I don't want to hear it. We got out of the alley. End of story," Sigman said.

"How do you think that man found us?"

"He's a Draculan hunter. It happens," Sigman said.

"He's better than the others. He got a nick on me." Amwolf held up his left arm. A wide gash from his elbow down to his wrist had been glued together.

"So fix it."

"I may be a doctor, but I'm also a Draculan. The wound weakened me. You'll have to bring the game here," Amwolf said.

"Here? No. It's too dangerous."

"Just for a couple days. You're good at it. Go to a bar meet a girl, bring her back."

"It isn't easy to turn on the charm all the time."

"Oh, come now. You're a New Yorker at heart. You ooze charm and sophistication. Remember, I think it was '02."

"No, 1903. Those were the nights! Too bad Mommy and Dad moved there," Sigman said.

"Well, they had no choice."

"Those locals have no idea how much our family did for them. All the charity organizations Mom chaired...well, before Dad turned her into a Draculan," Sigman said.

"And he was lucky to find her. Out of five hundred and seventy wives, only Mom gave him an heir," Amwolf said.

"Twins. Why don't we have more brothers and sisters?"

"As I've explained before a hundred times only you don't listen." Amwolf smacked Sigman on the head.

"Stop it," Sigman said as he touched his head, "that hurts."

"Only type O blood born under a full moon can give Draculans heirs."

"I thought that was just a myth."

"It's not I'm afraid. My poor, simple brother," Amwolf said.

"Well, now that the parents are living in my apartment, it's not fun anymore. Mom has such outdated ideas about women. She thinks we should settle down and get a few hundred wives – all for her to be a grandmother! I wish she'd have stayed in Romania."

"Sigman! Shame! Our mother is only looking out for your best interest. You tend to want it all. Settling down wouldn't kill you. Maybe you'd stop all that partying. I mean remember all the girls in Vegas? It was well over a hundred. That was quite the binge."

"I was humiliated when she sent Dad after me. And the fact that he cut off the money...I won't forgive them."

Amwolf said, "Stop being so selfish, they had to get out of Romania. Poor Mom and Dad woke up inflamed with a stake through their hearts."

"It was my apartment!" Sigman said.

"They paid for it. You should have made something of yourself. Now you're a washed-up actor."

"I'm not washed up. I'm between gigs," Sigman added.

"Please! You can't go out in the daytime. You weren't seriously an actor."

"I would bleed for the theatre!"

"Well, that Draculan Hunter took a pint of mine last night. I must stay indoors. Will you get me a few girls, or guys, and bring them here? Remember how I took you in after Dad kicked you out. I do too much for you," Amwolf said.

"Thank you."

"Dad shouldn't have kicked me out."

"You're not a child anymore, you are six hundred and ninety-six years old," Amwolf said.

"Do you think they'll trace that attack to us? Which hospital is that girl in?"

"Temple."

"What if..."

"No, way. It's too dangerous if I admit you. I need to work. It keeps us afloat and you'd go nuts with all that blood at the hospital. You have no self-control. The girl doesn't remember anything. Maybe you should go to bars outside the city to get the cops off our backs."

"Or maybe we should fly to Texas for a few weeks. I love all those spunky gals! And it's college football season. Those cheerleaders!" Sigman rubbed his hands together.

"Next week, when I recover. We can go then. But no binge drinking. Promise?"

"You have my word."

"Until then, maybe we should stick to the homeless?"

"No, I'm not eating fast food! You should know what that does to us. I just worked too hard on my body to get it trim to pack on the weight by eating--"

"Now now! You can pick up prostitutes then."

"Please, we can't be at that point yet."

"We are, thanks to that hunter."

"I'm going to enjoy taking him out."

"No, we're playing it smart. Lay low. He's the best hunter I've seen in three hundred years. Remember, if you draw attention to yourself, you'll have to find another place to crash. Understand?"

"Yes, Amwolf."

Chapter 4

Sigman waited until dark to go to St Agnes' Soup Kitchen. The homeless ate their late-night dinner as Sigman looked inside the window. He waited for them to leave. The hall had fluorescent lights overhead and he couldn't stand them, although they weren't strong enough to kill him. The LED lights might. How he missed the good old days of the incandescent light bulbs.

The door swung open and a woman exited. Sigman had thought he'd be stuck with homeless men, but the girl was pleasing. He might even toy with her for a time before he finished her off. He realized it was that girl at the alley. He couldn't believe his good fortune. Here was the opportunity he awaited. He could just bite her for the second time and be rid of her. She was a good bite he recalled. One of his better bites. Maybe it would be worth it to turn her into one of his kind. Then he thought better of it, once she became a vampire, the nagging would begin: "You never look into my eyes like you did when I was human." Sigman sighed.

She would have no memory of their first encounter. Such was the ways of his kind. Hypnotic powers, super strength, serial seducer, these were the ways of the sons and daughters of Dracula. Sigman hated needing such inferior beings. His constant lust for blood forced him to rely on humans. He was a rare phenomenon. He was born, not made. His nature was immortal. He would live forever as Lord of the World.

The curse of his kind was the need for blood in order to remain strong. The lack of blood in him had to be filled by his prey. His sharp teeth were so precise he could do surgery on his victims, drinking any amount of their blood, hence deciding if they lived or died. If he bit the same human once, there was a good chance they would recover none the wiser. If he took a second, then the prey would die quickly. He usually chose this for his game. The draining of one human took care of his hunger for weeks. If he took just one bite, he would be hungry a few days later. It was too dangerous to hunt that often. After his personal experiences, he had learned to avoid the third bite.

His took his first bride in his youth just after he learned to feed on his own. If he had more control, he wouldn't have Victoria nagging him, something he had to live with for all of eternity. Lately, Victoria, who would never leave her hometown and travel, sent him constant texts. Whoever said technology was a good thing lied. Before the internet he could avoid her for centuries. Now he had to make up excuses like he dropped the phone in the sink. Yes, he learned to avoid the third bite.

"Pardon me, Miss. I have a donation to make for the shelter." Sigman handed her a twenty-dollar bill. Kelly Harper jumped as he handed her the money. She touched the bandage on the right side of her neck.

"Thanks, I'll give this to Sister Maryann tomorrow," Kelly said.

"Are you okay?" Sigman pointed to her neck.

"Oh, yeah, just an accident. I'm okay now. This is my first day back. I'm a bit jumpy."

"I can imagine."

Kelly said, "You seem very familiar. Have we met?"

"I don't believe so. I am Sigman Van Horn." He bowed.

"I'm Kelly Harper. Thanks for the donation. As Sister Maryann says, God Bless you."

Sigman scowled at the mention of God, but the woman didn't notice. "You do such noble work. I should offer thanks to you."

"I like it. I think it's the best job in the world. Helping people who are at the lowest point of their lives, it helps me remember why we're on this earth. Forgive me, I didn't mean to go on like that. I just get excited when I talk about my work."

"As I do talking about mine," Sigman said.

They arrived at the street corner and Kelly flagged down a taxi.

"What do you do?"

"I'm an actor."

Kelly said, "How lovely."

"Well, an out of work one right now. But I'm staying with my brother. He's a doctor and I'm working for him right now until I find an acting job."

"Oh, what do you do for him?"

"Patient referrals at the present."

"It sounds like a good line of work, if the acting doesn't come through that is."

"Yes. It was nice to meet you."

She opened the cab door.

The wind whipped through the buildings and Kelly's hair flew up. She said, "Whoa! Not a good night. I think there's a storm coming."

"Probably. See you around." He put his hands in his jean pockets.

She got into the cab and before she closed the door, she looked at him as the wind blew his coat. She hesitated. "Do you need a ride? We can share the cab."

“Really? That's so nice of you.” Sigman had calculated it right. The girl would be too easy. He was almost disappointed.

The cabbie pulled out. Kelly told Sigman about her work with the homeless as he looked into her eyes. It was difficult to get her to look back into them. He moved his head to match hers, right then left. She looked down instead of into his eyes. He felt like he was doing a chicken dance.

“Excuse me, Sigman, but why are you mimicking me?”

“Oh, that. I'm trying to get you to look into my eyes.”

“Why?”

Sigman kissed her hard. She pushed him away. “What do you think you're doing?”

She looked into his eyes and she was hypnotized. He began to kiss her again and she offered him no resistance. “Kelly, you're coming back to my apartment.”

Kelly said, “I'm coming back to your apartment.”

Sigman said, “Driver, skip the first address.”

Chapter 5

“Hey, is she all right?” The cab driver said as he turned his head.

Sigman bared his fangs and the man turned the wheel quickly and hit into a motorcycle parked on the side of the street. Sigman looked fierce, and the cabbie stopped the taxi and ran out of the car.

Now that they were alone in the cab, Sigman took his time. He wouldn't need to take her back to the apartment. He could finish her off first, and then stop again and pick something up for Amwolf on the way home. Amwolf was such a health nut anyway. The girl was too good to waste on his brother. He licked her neck. A good meal should never be hurried. She was attractive. It was lonely in Philly and his brother was working most nights. Amwolf's work must be a distraction for him. His parents had each other. He realized how alone he was.

Sigman hadn't thought of it, but perhaps the cycle of hunting was getting old. If he had someone to come home to, wouldn't that be better than all the games he was so good at playing? Maybe he'd turn her. What would it hurt to take another bride?

Then he thought of Victoria and he paused. Vampires never got headaches, but Victoria gave him a pretty good idea of what it must be like to suffer from them.

Kelly moaned and he thought that he better end her after all. He drew out his back fangs and his mouth grew wider. He was ready to strike. Then he heard a rapping. It was so annoying to be in the middle of something and to hear such a loud sound.

Sigman looked up as the glass of the back window shattered, scattering bits and pieces everywhere.

Sigman felt a prick against his shoulder. He realized that he had been cut. He let out a howl that caused the dogs throughout the neighborhood to bark and yelp. Then he saw the door next to where Kelly was slumped over open and a man grabbed her and yanked. Sigman grabbed her feet. The man tugged harder and Sigman pulled her back inside the cab. Kelly woke up and screamed.

It didn't look like it was so easy now. She kicked Sigman and he became off balanced and he let go as she kicked. Then Kelly was pulled free. Sigman was so angry he tore the roof off the cab. Embarrassed, he realized too late he could have merely opened the door next to him. He got out of the cab through the door. He would remain the civilized gentlemen he had been for centuries. Then he would kill them both. No humans should be so much trouble.

The man carried her with ease, and Sigman realized he was very strong as he felt the wound and cupped his hand over the spot. Then his anger overtook the injury and he ran. He reached the man carrying Kelly.

“Give her to me and I'll let you live, Draculan Hunter!”

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