

Hera, Love & Revenge by Jenny Fox

Chapter 10

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Now I'm a bit curious to try the old vampire ladies' drink... Although I have a feeling I might be a century or two too young for that. I glance around the room, but pretty much everyone's been introduced, except for the couple, but I'm guessing those two are Juliet and John, the couple Cata mentioned earlier. They are the only ones acting like one anyway... I also hear a man's voice chatting with Richard somewhere else on this floor, but they are whispering, and moreover, they are speaking in a language I don't recognize.

"Is this everyone coming?" I ask Felicia.

"Probably not... I'm guessing a couple more will show up. We were just the fastest to arrive. I normally live in Ireland, so does Rebecca, we flew here together. Anna flew from Germany, and Cecily from France. We're waiting for a couple more, I think."

"Sounds like everyone's pretty scattered around Europe..."

"Well, you feel the need for some independence after seeing the same faces for decades. We only gather once a year or for occasions like this."

"That makes sense..."

Although I had no family with whom I ever got to experience that. I can't say I've seen any of them as regularly as once a year since I was born... The last chance I got to see my Father was at a fancy party, perhaps two years ago. We exchanged a couple of words and posed for the cameras, and that was it. I have a half brother, but half our blood is all we have in common. I feel as related to them as I do now with the people in this room... Okay, perhaps an inch closer to Bart, Cata and Richard. But then again, I've just spent more time with them than I have with my actual family in the last five, perhaps ten years.

"So can I ask what you usually... do?" I ask, curious. Daily Latest update

"Oh, I'm an artist. I really like the twenty-first century for that, makes it pretty easy to work from home and yet interact with a lot of people. I'll send you the link to my Etsy shop sometime if you want! Of course, you get a family discount. Everyone in this room found themselves an activity to keep themselves busy with that doesn't really require physical presence during the day... John and Juliet run a guest house, Anna writes books and is a patron of arts. Lancelot is into the tourism business, and Benedict owns a few restaurants in Italy, Spain and France. Rebecca isn't crazy about working but she does own a few salons and shops."

"What about Claude?" I whisper, still well-aware I'm getting some intense creepy stare action from his corner.

"Oh... No idea."

Felicia and I exchange a glance, and we chuckle, amused. Guess not all vampires can be cool and busy running businesses...

"Only those who still live here don't have an activity of their own," Felicia shrugs. "We could probably live off Richard's money forever anyway... It's more of a personal need, after a few years. Not like he minds either way. How are you getting along so far? With Catherina and the others?"

"Agnes kicked me out of her room after I bothered her, Bart and I had our first sibling fight, and... Cata is sweet."

"Fair enough," she chuckles. "We wouldn't be a family without the drama. Give it a few years, everyone in this room will either love you, hate you or be indifferent. And I promise Agnes is adorable, if you can just..."

"Catch her without a book in her hands?"

"That happens once in a decade," Felicia winks at me.

I chuckle. Well, if I could just stay at home and do nothing but my favorite hobby for the rest of my days, I probably wouldn't complain much either... It's just that I don't have anything I can call much of a hobby. In fact, I can't remember the last time I got to choose to do something in my free time...

"Felicia?" Cata suddenly steps in. "Can you come and help me in the kitchen, dear?"

"Sure."

"I-"

"Hera," she interrupts me. "Can you and Bart go and get me some fresh rosemary from the Garden, please?"

I frown. Bart and I to get some rosemary? Seriously, Cata? Unfortunately for me, of course he heard, and he's already rolling his eyes while still heading for a door I haven't gone through yet, the one leading to the garden, most likely. I turn around to complain to Cata, but she and Felicia are already gone. Great...
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A bit annoyed, I walk to the door to join him, aware that a lot of silent gazes follow me across the room. We step into the garden, and I look around. It's a simple square, but Cata obviously took ownership of most of it, as eighty percent is a flourishing vegetable and herb garden. The only two seats are strategically positioned under a gazebo in one corner of the garden, with a coffee table. I'm

guessing another reading spot for Agnes... As I keep looking though, I realize there's actually someone seated there. In fact, even though my eyes are good with the darkness, it takes me a few seconds to see a dark silhouette with the dark furniture.

"My god, Beatrix!" Bart exclaims, visibly spooked too.

She opens her eyes, making me realize she had them closed all along. A shiver immediately runs down my spine, and I know she's old. Not Richard-old, but still older than most of the others... perhaps all of them. She slowly stands up. She's wearing an entirely black outfit, and I have to say, she also has the most beautiful, darkest skin I have ever seen. Her hair is also completely black, and laced in complex braids and dreadlocks along her limbs. She slowly walks up to us, staring at me the whole time, but just when I'm about to introduce myself, I realize she isn't stopping. I step out of the way, feeling almost pushed, and she quietly walks back inside. She hasn't said a word. I turn to Bart for answers, but he just shrugs.

"That's Beatrix for you. Don't worry, she just... Doesn't talk much. In fact, I don't think she utters more than a couple of words a year. It's not about you, she doesn't talk to the others either, except for Richard."

"...I got the chills, like with Richard."

"Yep, she's one of the old ones... You have good instincts. She's the third oldest of the family, and the oldest of the women."

"If Richard's the oldest, who's second?"

"Claude."

I raise an eyebrow. Claude the Creep is older than that Lady? I didn't feel anything from him at all... Is he bad at the Domination thing? Or is it just that he's as harmless as Lancelot said? Funny... So I can't really trust my instinct to identify all the old ones...

While I'm still staring at the door Beatrix left through, Bart sighs and walks up to one of the pots containing the herbs. I hesitate.

"...Are you still mad at me?"

"Yes."

I grimace. I should have expected so... At least he answered, and didn't simply tell me to fuck off.

"I don't like you being mad at me," I mutter.

"Oh, don't play cute with me, I'm too old to fall for that," he grimaces. "...Okay, fine, I do understand you had some circumstances. Some of which are weird, by the way. Plus, I trust Richard. I'm kind of curious why he went all the way to New

Amsterdam for a suicidal chick, it can't be that simple. I have a feeling there's more to it than that."

Same here... Although I haven't had any success in getting him to tell me anything. I feel like a child trying to get the adults to explain adult stuff to her. Bart sighs, and turns around, showing me what's probably the rosemary.

"So?" I ask, tilting my head, still acting cute. Daily Latest update

"...This is why I'd rather have a little brother," he groans, and walks away. "Little sisters are always a pain in the ass..."

I laugh, but I follow him inside, pretty sure that means he's fine with me again. As I walk in, I notice Richard's back in one corner of the room, and Beatrix is now standing right next to him, very close, almost like she's his shadow. He's talking to another man though, one I haven't seen yet. This vampire can't be too old, as I don't feel any of the dominance like with Beatrix, and he seems to be avoiding looking at her. He has small, round glasses on the edge of his nose, with odd red shades. He's bald and he has just one black earring, an inverted cross. The rest of his outfit is a simple black shirt, a red tie, and leather pants, a popular choice in the Heartgraves family... I'd place him in his late forties because of the silver goatee, but he barely seems to have any wrinkles, and his facial muscles aren't moving much as he talks either.

"Bart," I grab his sleeve. "Who is that talking with Richard?"

He glances, and scoffs.

"Swithin Hugo Heartgraves. The family's financial advisor, and the worst crook you'll ever meet. That guy is a whale amongst sharks, a massive monster of the financial world. Ask him for advice, but never, ever make a deal with him. If he likes you, he can make you rich, but otherwise, he'll empty your pockets and leave huge holes in their place. Even if you're family... Lancelot still owes him a few million, they can't stand each other. Well, that was Lance's fault for opening his big mouth as usual... Anyway, Swithin's in charge of a good number of Richard's properties and assets, and he's the reason we are ten times richer than we should be."

So, one to get on my side if I can. Not like I have anything he could extort from me anyway, I've got a couple of decades before I leave the nest, I think. As if he'd felt my stare, he suddenly stares in my direction, gauging me from behind his red shades. I smile awkwardly, aware that he's probably heard most of our conversation... I glance around the room. Cata and Felicia just came back carrying more food, and Bart walks up to Cata to hand her the rosemary, which I'm pretty sure was just a pretext to get the two of us talking. The older ladies Rebecca and Anna are getting louder than before, and that bottle is not empty. Big Boots Cecily is on her phone, visibly bored with everybody else. Lancelot and Benedict are now chatting with John, while Juliet is still standing next to him, but our eyes meet. She gives me a faint, polite smile, and quickly walks over to stand next to me. She's really pretty too, with golden blonde hair and blue eyes, reminding me of my former self a bit. Except that her skin is paler, and she's really thin, looking almost sickly for a vampire. All the others have thin but well-defined, lean builds,

while Juliet just looks thin and frail. John isn't the most muscular amongst the men nor the tallest, so she didn't stand out as much next to him and his dark skin before. Yet now that I see her from up close, I realize Juliet's definitely the palest in the room, her complexion almost gray, like a doll. Her black dress also seems oversized, and that black choker covering her neck is a bit odd.

"Hi," she mutters. "So, I'm not the youngest anymore."

I nod.

"Looks like it. To be honest, I'm surprised to meet this many people at once... Was it like this for you as well?"

She shakes her head, looking almost a bit sad.

"Sadly, no. Things were way different back then... It was hard for the family to gather like this. You're a bit of a special case too."

"A Special Case?"

"Well, you're the first one Richard has transformed in over a hundred years. It's been so long since we had someone new in the family!"

...In a hundred years? Richard hasn't transformed anyone since a century ago? I look around the room. There's about ten people here, and Bart was turned in 1666, Cata a century after that... Judging from the different reactions to each of them, they can't all have a century between them. I turn back to Juliet, a bit confused.

"Really?"

"Yes," she nods. "I was turned in 1918, and since then, Richard has never transformed someone, not until you."

"So everyone else has been transformed... before that?"

"Yes. John was transformed in 1839, and there were a couple more after him."Daily Latest update Daily Latest update

Wow, no wonder I'm the "Baby"... Shit, that means literally everyone is at the very least a century old here. But why? Why did he stop creating new vampires, and why did he change his mind with me? The more I hear, the more questions appear and the more confused I am. At least, the Heartgraves aren't all as secretive about this. What's more surprising is, no one in the room really reacts to what Juliet just told me, when I'm well aware every single one of them potentially heard it. I guess you learn to filter what you want to hear or not...

Suddenly, just as I'm thinking about that, several conversations all end at the same time; it's not just us. They all look at each other, or glance at the door connecting to the corridor. I see Rebecca smirk, amused, and when I turn my head,

Juliet had slid right back behind John. One second late, I hear heeled footsteps, and somebody stops at the front door. After a second of hesitation, Bart's the one to move to go open the door.

A tall woman walks in, and unlike the others, she's in red from head to toe. She's a redhead with a short haircut, with red lips, in a red suit, and with a gorgeous pair of red heels. Unlike me, she's a real redhead: she has freckles and perfectly matching green eyes. I kind of already like her, she's a walking statement. She stops on the doorstep, and glances around, assessing the people present, her large golden hoops following her head movement until she stops on John and Juliet, and sighs.

"...Grace," he greets her with a bitter expression.

From the smirk on Rebecca and Anne's faces and everybody else's awkward expression, I'm guessing there's some unspoken drama here. She ignores him, and instead, turns back to Richard.

"Hello."

"Welcome home," says Swithin, giving her a nod. Daily Latest update

"Grace!" Exclaims Catherina, moving around the room to go and give her a quick hug.

Several others then all greet her, although Cata was the only one to actually move, and Bart is back next to me, arms crossed. She gives me a faint nod too.

"So that's the Baby," She says. "Welcome to the family, Hun."

"Thanks."

"...It's good that you came, Grace," says John, visibly trying out his luck again.

From the way Juliet is visibly even more intimidated next to him and the glare Grace gives him, I'd say that trio is the one with the history...

"Oh, don't flatter yourself, John," she retorts, suddenly walking over to the TV. "I didn't come to see your face, I came for Hera, and because Richard asked me to."

She turns it on, and then steps back, visibly trying to cast something on. Several of the vampires, except for the couple, move to the seatings or closer to it.

"You do know how bloody annoying the Americans are when we ask them for a favor?" She asks Richard.

"I'll make sure to send it back to them sometime," he smiles. Daily Latest update

Grace smiles back, showing off her fangs, and turns her head back to the TV. Bart gives me a little elbow bump.

“Rejoice Baby Vamp, it’s movie night.”

Movie night? The video Grace is trying to project doesn’t look like a movie... More like some amateur recording one could find on any social Media. I frown, confused.

“...What are we watching?” I ask, as it seems everyone but me already knows.

Richard steps forward, his blue eyes riveted on the TV.

“...Your funeral, Darling.”