

Hera, Love & Revenge by Jenny Fox

Chapter 2

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"...So this isn't a dream," I mutter.

"No, Dear, it's not. You're very much awake."

"But I'm... dead."

"Yes, and no. You're not like any human anymore. It will take time, but you shall get used to it, eventually. We will teach you everything you need to know as one of our own."

"Like... what?" I mutter. "I can't... Sir, I'm..."

"Richard," he smiles. "You can call me Richard."

There's a hint of amusement in his tone, but this is also a real thing. He is giving me permission to call him by his name, a permission I wasn't sure I had before... It's like meeting a very old person, and not being sure how familiar you can get with them. Richard's been... strangely nice to me so far, but it makes me all the more confused. I nod faintly.

"It's alright to be a bit confused at first," he continues. "But worry not, Dear. All the answers will come, and... as it so happens, you'll have all the time you need to get the answers."

"Do you mean I'm... immortal or something?"

"No, you're not. But... If you listen to me, and avoid trouble, you will get to live a very, very long time."

I hesitate. I don't feel immortal, that's for sure, but I feel... different. I'm aware the fresh cuts on my wrists should still be bleeding, not already fading into thin scars like they are now. My skin looks a bit different too. It's hard to notice in the night-blue darkness of the plane, but it seems a couple of shades paler. My veins are slightly more visible, and... wait. The darkness of the plane? I glance up. The lights have been off all along. We're in the dark, but I can see... perfectly fine.

"Did you notice?" Richard smiles. "Night vision. We tend to forget, but it is quite useful, isn't it? You've become a creature of darkness now, Darling."

"I am going to grow... claws and fangs?" I scoff.

"Only the fangs," he chuckles. "The claws are more of an... aesthetical choice."

His fangs aren't so obvious that they'd trigger much suspicion, either. In fact, it's hard enough to look him in the eye as it is, I wouldn't mind his longer-than-normal canines otherwise... Perhaps it's a reflex, but he also doesn't open his mouth enough that I'd see it much either. I try to look for mine with my tongue. I don't know if they've really grown, but my canines do feel sharper... pointier. I wonder what else has changed...

"Then... what?"

"It will come with time," he said. "Like I said, we've got time. Your senses will be what you should listen and follow from now on, Hera. Only your senses. You'll see that everything is different, when you're different."

"That name... Why are you calling me that?" I frown.

"Because you cannot be June anymore," he says. "You've been reborn, child. And especially because you were born in such times, your new life will need to start under a new name, a new identity."

I do guess it will be hard for me to appear as "June Starr" again... Millions of people knew my name, my face. How am I going to ever be able to step out again? I'm supposed to be dead... I can change my name, but can I really change enough that no one will recognize me? Judging from his attitude, Richard already has something in mind. Taking me to a different continent is probably just the start.

"...Why Hera, though?" I ask. "You could have... let me pick a new name myself."

"No child chooses their own name."

That's a rule for babies, but I'm a full-grown twenty-five year old...

"You don't like it?"

"No... I mean, I don't hate it," I shrug. "I don't really care, to be honest..."

That's true. I've hated my first name, June, basically all my life. Still, because I was a child celebrity, the daughter of the famous Starr Family, it stuck to me like a tattoo I couldn't get rid of no matter how I tried. Most people hate their name because it doesn't sound good to them, or because it relates to something stupid, someone who outshines them. Not me. I hated my name because it just showed how little my parents cared when they named me. I was born in June, so they named me June. The fucking irony.

"...Do you know who Hera is?" Asks Richard.

"Isn't she a Greek goddess?"

"Yes. The Queen of the Greek Gods... and her Roman name is Juno."

So that's why... He chose a name that's somewhat related to mine. It's not like it will be forgettable, I guess... It's a bit overwhelming, in fact. Hera Heartgraves... It does sound good, maybe a bit pretentious, but I've got no issues with that. I like it a lot better than my previous name, for one. I have no regret throwing June Starr into oblivion, but I'm not sure I'm ready yet to be Hera Heartgraves...

"Alright," I mutter, although I'm well aware my opinion doesn't matter. "Then... what do you expect of me?"

"Nothing, for now," Richard smiles down at his glass. "You need some time away from the media, and to get familiar with everything. Becoming a Heartgraves is going to keep you busy for a little while."

He said becoming a Heartgraves, not becoming a vampire... Does that mean getting familiar with his... family will be more challenging than becoming a... a vampire? I try to take a breath, but it feels unnatural. Well, at least I'm a bit confident in my adaptation skills. I am... I mean, was an actress after all. Damn, what am I going to do now? I literally left everything behind in New York City. And as irony has it, I'm now headed to London...

"...Who are you?" I ask Richard.

Perhaps I should have started with that...

"A very old vampire," he smiles, looking amused.

"I don't know much about vampires but that sounds awfully vague," I groan, a new wave of nausea coming.

"Not so much," he says, sipping his wine. "You'll have trouble meeting vampires as old as I am, Darling. I hope you don't, for your own sake."

Avoid old vampires. Noted. Although I have no idea how I'm supposed to identify "old" vampires, when Richard looks like he could barely be my father...

"...Why did you choose to turn me?" I frown. "Are you a fan or something?"

"Not really," he scoffs. "I can't say I've seen more than a couple of your movies, and to be honest, I did not enjoy them."

"You've got good taste then," I groan.

I wonder which ones he saw... They were probably just as joyfully torn apart by the critics, anyway.

"Your acting skills were good, though."

That surprises me. He takes his cane, his long fingers slowly moving along the Lion's mane. I don't answer; I'm the type who just gets clueless and speechless when I get a compliment... My fans used to find it cute, the journalists annoying.

“So what... you were just passing by and decided to turn me?”

“Something like that,” he smiles.

Now, I might be barely better than average as an actress, but I can detect a lie when I hear and see it. I won't press it further, though; whatever reasons he had, he's not telling me. Perhaps it was pity or something... I put my chin on my fist and look outside again, hoping looking at the sea of clouds can help ease my nausea...

“...Why am I feeling so sick?” I groan after a while.

Aren't vampire transformations always smooth in movies? Like... You die and bam, you're reborn and everything's fine, glowing skin and all? What the heck is this feeling like all my organs hate me?

“Your body is going through some difficult changes,” explains Richard. “The transformation differs for each individual. Some have it quick and easy, for others, it can take a while, and be more bothersome...”

Bothersome? I feel like I'm going through a hangover, a flu, and a gastroenteritis all at the same time. I feel feverish, but I can't feel the cold, it's a weird sensation. What the heck did I do in my previous life to deserve this...

“Does it ever fail?” I suddenly worry. “Can I... just die again, or turn into a zombie or something?”

“No. You'll survive.”

He seems amused. Well, it couldn't hurt to ask... I need to think of something else to ask. It's hard to ignore the nausea, but at least when we talk, I've got something else to focus on.

“Why England?” I groan.

“I told you, it's home. It really bothers you, doesn't it?” He squints his ice-blue eyes at me. “...It's your homeland too.”

I suddenly turn back to him, shocked. How the hell does he know that?

“The lies you told the media are of no concern to me,” he said. “I'm just curious why you were so adamant to lie about so many things of your past. Things such as your birthplace and birthday don't seem enough to trigger a scandal, unless you hide them.”

I sigh.

“It was just an attempt at... hiding some stuff I didn't want to deal with. People were always trying to dig around my family and my private life. I just didn't feel like giving them more things to sniff around.”

"Including your mother?"

I stiffen involuntarily. Does he know about my mom as well? I grimace. For a woman I barely remember, she sure made herself overwhelmingly present in my life...

"You know about my mother?"

"It made the headlines for a while," he simply says. "Her death."

There we go again. All the press found to talk about was the tragic death of my mother. It was a sensational story at the time, enough to make the headlines on every continent... I didn't think my own death would be the same, but it does feel like a sad echo. We both died at about the same age, and our last name will be enough for those vultures to write lots and lots about. I hate it.

So I'm guessing Richard did turn me into one of... his kind knowing pretty much everything. It makes sense, I guess. He looks like he has the money to buy information... What am I getting into now? It can't be worse than before, anyway. I glance outside again. I feel like sighing, but even that simple thing feels weird now. I don't know how much my body is going to change but it definitely feels like things will be different. I already feel odd. Different. As if I'm drunk and my head and my body just won't get on the same wavelength. Perhaps that's why I feel so sick. Or perhaps it's just the flight...

"Earlier... What did you use to make me sleep? I barely remember, but I remember it was strong."

"It's not something any vampire can do on anybody. It's simply called the Domination, or Charm. It's something we can use to control and compel the weaker-minded."

"Weaker-minded?" I raise an eyebrow, slightly offended.

"Weaker. You're not in your normal state," he explains, visibly amused. "And I'm much stronger and more persuasive than you are, too. I doubt many vampires would be able to resist me, even in their normal state. It's like hypnosis. I wouldn't be able to persuade you to do something extreme, either."

I'm not so sure about that. His voice forced me to sleep before he had even said the word... Would I be able to resist if he ordered me to kill someone, or myself? I really wouldn't be able to say for sure. Richard hasn't shown any ill intent towards me so far, quite the opposite, yet all of my instincts are telling me that man is powerful, and dangerous. There's this fear in the back of my mind that just won't shut up and calm down...

"So... Darkness vision, Hypnosis thing... Superspeed?"

"Do you feel faster?"

He's amused again. I must be like a child trying to play with a new toy....

"Not really," I admit.

"You will. Humans were accurate on a couple of things, although they exaggerated a bit on most. For now, you're just at the beginning of your transformation. Your body is trying to resist the transformation."

"So that's why I feel like shit..."

"You will feel like shit for a little while longer. You should probably sleep."

"I feel sick again," I groan. "I don't want to throw up."

"You won't remember it."

That doesn't make me feel much better. Nevertheless, I feel Richard's powerful suggestion overwhelming me again. What did he call it? Domination? It sure feels like it... It's like a big wave crushing me, almost knocking me asleep. I try to resist, thinking I don't really want to be subjected to this, but it just gets worse. As if I've just provoked him into knocking me out more. In seconds, I lose the fight.

"...I've never seen anyone being so sick."

"Do you think it's abnormal?"

"It seems a bit like it. Either she's reacting strongly to the transformation, or there was something off with her that the transformation's trying to get rid of. It just doesn't make sense she'd be this sick otherwise. Her body was in a better condition than most, and she's young. We can always figure out what went wrong when she's up."

"Hm..."

"Don't worry, Richard. She looks like a tough one, she'll pull through."

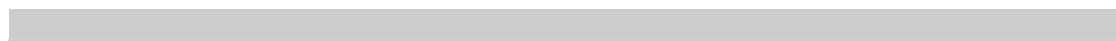
"...Catherina, call everyone home for me."

"...Everyone?"

"Everyone."

"...We haven't heard from some of them in decades."

"They didn't have a good reason to. Now they do. ...Tell them all to come here. They have to meet their younger sister."



***Author Note: Thanks for reading and for all the comments, you're amazing!! ^-^**