

Hera, Love & Revenge by Jenny Fox

Chapter 6

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"We're going to a different place?" I ask as he walks away from the bar, towards the main street.

"Even if you're hot, Baby Vamp, it's going to look suspicious if you keep picking up boys that don't come back, no?"

Fair point. I sped up behind him, trying to rearrange my hair, pull down my dress... anything to make me feel like I didn't just almost eat a random guy. I almost feel like there's still blood dripping down my lip, but no, he wiped it all off perfectly. Bart chuckles at my nervousness, and puts an arm around my waist again.

"Relax, little sister, you've got this, I promise."

"It's not anything like I imagined," I mutter. "I was thinking of something a bit more... action-packed."

"You mean jumpin on the roofs, running in a forest? Yeah, no, this is the wrong century for that. We'd be on some stupid Social Media within an hour. A smart hunter is a hunter that makes the job quick and clean, Hera. We're not savages... Although, some of us do like a messy job. But they don't get to live long."

"...Why?"

He glances around. We're now immersed in the crowd again, looking like any other pair of young people, perhaps a bit more gothic with our pale hair and dark clothes. Nothing unusual for the ever eclectic London... Can any of these humans imagine that we are not like them? That we could... jump and kill them right now? A young girl walks by. She's laughing with her friends, but all I can see is the fair skin of her throat, exposed, and that vein that pulsates vividly... Gosh, snap out of it. I'm getting mildly obsessed with exposed flesh now.

"The thirst is the first thing you need to learn to tame," Bart drags me out of my pitfall thinking. "How well you can control yourself is what makes you less of a beast. If you try to resist it, it gets gradually worse. You have to resist the pull so you won't kill your prey, but you cannot ignore it. It's a thin line. You'll lose control a couple of times while feeding, we all do. Accidents happen, we're doing our best to avoid it. But it's better than really turning into a beast. If you start to feel thirsty, go out and feed yourself long enough to hold back."

"It's like an addiction," I sigh, my eyes on another neck. "If I feed too often, I'll get addicted, but if I don't, I'll want it even more, did I get it right?"

"Yes. It's our curse, there's no end to it, you'll have to find your own way to tame it."

"...What happens if we make a... an accident?"

I feel him stiffen. He glances around.

"We... don't like exposure. Risks. Some people got cocky and thought they could just go around emptying humans like blood bags. The problem is, if you get too addicted, you don't stop. And if you don't stop, you turn into a monster, and somebody else has to stop you. We will even attack our own kind, just like you hissed at me before. If you're lucky, it's your own family that intervenes. If not... outsiders get involved, and it gets messy. Trust me, our kind will take care of the problems before humans notice."

"So other vamp-... Others could get involved?"

"Not often," Bart shrugs. "Truth is, probably won't, at least if you stay around with us. We usually keep the babies like you around until we're sure they can manage on their own. Richard hates to get involved with others."

"Are there a lot? Of others?"

"It's hard to keep track. During some periods, it was easy to be what we are. Nowadays? It's gotten complicated, to say the least. I'm guessing there will be fewer and fewer of us. Those who can adapt will be fine, but we're already seeing some of... the older generations having trouble coping. They move to more remote areas, or just disappear. I can't really blame them. Well, you'll have a nice sample tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" I gasp. "Richard called them all so soon?"

"Those who want to come will make it. Come on, enough chit-chat, you're still in class right now. Let's have fun."

I nod, and Bart pulls me again towards more crowded streets. Just walking amongst humans is a challenge, now that I have tasted warm blood... It's odd how I was like any of them just days ago, and now I couldn't feel more different. I'm like a foreigner, every single thing reminds me of how different we are. My senses are heightened, and I can hear hundreds of voices at once, close and far, and the various tones in them. I feel the stampede of hundreds of feet on the sidewalk, the ruckus of pans and utensils from the restaurants, the sounds of the busy streets all mixed together like a concerto. I'm guessing my brain also learned how to just sort what's important or not, or else I'd have gone mad in seconds from the cacophony.

This time, Bart guides me to a high-end bar with reggaeton music. I kind of like it already. Bart smiles at me, and once again, we walk in like we own the place. I'm really starting to get into this. It's crowded as hell, but we head to the bar first to get at the center of the action, two new glasses of whiskey in our hands. It still doesn't taste like anything stronger than diluted honey, but it's good enough to

keep my thirst under control for a little bit. Damn, I'd be dead as a plank if I'd drunk this while I was still human...

"New target?" I ask, seeing as he keeps glancing around.

"Take it easy Baby Vamp," he laughs. "Come on, let's dance a bit!"

To my surprise, he takes the glass out of my hand, and pulls me to the dance floor. ...Seriously? Bart smiles, and makes me spin. The rhythm of the music is easy, and I've never felt so confident with my body. I feel taller, stronger... sexier. Bart starts moving, and I just let myself move along to the music. The Caribbean rhythms are starting to get to me. I can't remember the last time I danced, or felt so free... I'm aware of all the eyes on me, and they can keep staring. I'm fearless. I'm the predator, and they are innocent creatures with no idea what I can do to them... The mere memory of that bite gives me a chill. Think about something else. I focus on the music again, and follow Bart's lead. He's an amazing dancer, I'd say. We dance like those sexy couples in movies, gathering all the attention on us. I feel even more empowered by his presence against me, sparking jealousy in many pairs of eyes. I can feel their envy, their admiration... and their desire.

Even better, I don't feel tired, almost not at all. My feet aren't getting sore despite the heels, my movements don't get any weaker, while we dance and dance and dance non-stop. I get drunk on the dancing, on the vivid sensations of my body, on following Bart's lead. I laugh when he strikes impromptu poses, but I do notice he's still scanning the crowd. He's having fun, but also not letting anything out of sight, always aware of who's around, what's going on. He makes me spin, and I land back against his chest.

"What are you checking for?" I whisper.

"I thought I had smelled trouble, but nevermind. We're clear."

"Trouble?"

"Don't worry about it. Care to pick your next dish, Baby? It's getting late and Richard should be up soon. Last one for today, so choose well."

"What about you?"

"Oh... Good point. Maybe I'll pick one for myself as well..."

He glances around, but as I suspected, he's already found a target. I see him gratify a dark-skinned, muscular young man with a faint smile.

"So that's your type?" I ask, amused.

"I can play on both teams, Baby. This boy has drunk nothing but quality alcohol all evening, has nice muscles and from the stares he's been giving me, it's going to be easy..."

Oh, so that's also why he was keeping an eye around and close to the bar... Does the taste change with their drinks? Good to know. Perhaps I'll learn a thing or two. I can't say I've been paying much attention until now. Unlike Bart, I'm more interested in the chase of the prey than their diet. Once again, I can't ignore a pair of assholes who have been ogling me all along. I think I'm enjoying swapping the narrative around a bit too much...

"Another emergency exit?"

"No, you're going to have to walk out the front door this time. Take a hard turn left, and there will be another street on your right. Check if it's empty, then have your fill... I won't be far behind. Just having my own dinner first..."

"...You're letting me do this alone?" I ask, a tad worried.

"Trust me, I'll get there long before you can kill them, we need to charm them anyway. You can try, but I'll need to do it to be sure."

He chuckles, and puts a quick kiss on my hand.

"Don't worry Baby, you're a natural. I'll be right back."

He then turns around and walks away, visibly pretending to be headed for the bathroom... Oh, he just signaled his prey. They are going to do this in the bathroom? Yuck. I sigh, but time for another acting gig. I pretend to be a bit annoyed, as if I'd just been abandoned by my partner, and turn around, heading in the opposite direction. I don't forget one last glance towards the duo of idiots. Will they both follow? Who knows. I fight the crowd a bit to get out, but damn it feels good to breathe some fresh air... or pretend to.

I follow Bart's directions, quickly finding the empty, narrow street. I keep walking without turning back, acting a bit unsteady on my feet. Soon enough, I hear them. A couple pairs of feet, following me, flat and heavy enough to be male. I smile, but I'm a bit nervous without Bart around. What if I do make an "accident"? It was pretty hard to stop last time... Perhaps I should stall a bit so he has time to arrive.

"Where are you headin', Love?"

I repress an eye roll, and turn around. I've played the damsel in distress so often that I can slide back in the act like it's a second skin. I flutter my eyelashes a couple of times and open my lips slightly, an innocent look that's enough to trigger a couple of vile thoughts in bastards like them. Indeed, I see their pupils narrow a bit. The alley's pretty dark, too, there are only lamplights at each end, and a broken one in-between. I keep slowly retreating, shoulder close to the wall, and sending fake worried glances back.

"Hey, wait for us, let's have a little chat, shall we?"

If they weren't such morons, they'd realize a woman slowing down instead of accelerating is odd. I let them catch up to me, and one just grabs my wrist. It's

probably meant to be forceful, but I barely feel it. Did Bart mention anything about harming them...?

"You were dancing like a little spitfire earlier, Hun. Care to dance a bit more for us?"

"Shut up."

I lock my eyes into his, and the man immediately stiffen like a plank. His lips are suddenly glued together, and there's a hint of fear showing up in his eyes. I maintain eye contact long enough, but he's under my control. His buddy chuckles, amused, with no idea what's going on.

"Oh, she's feisty eh?"

I turn to him, and immediately, grab his attention as well. I don't even need to utter the words, he stiffens like his friend. So I can take both under my control... I'm wondering if the fact that they are both highly intoxicated and visibly not intellectually blessed helps. Without any further delay, I grab the second guy, and pull him by his hair to expose his throat. He smells pretty unappetizing, and I'm starting to regret my choice. I need to ask Bart his tips next time...

I bite.

Immediately, I forget all about the smell, and just sip in the warm, sweet nectar flowing out. I understand why he picked someone sturdier, I can take several good mouthfuls without being too worried. There's a slight taste of cheap beer, actually. This time, I try to be careful not to get too into it. I take one sip at a time, and keep my eyes open, focusing on the sound the guy makes rather than the addictive taste in my mouth...

I take a deep breath and step back. I glance at my bite mark on his neck. The guy looks stoned, but at least, he's alive... I'm a bit proud of myself. I leave him like this, and turn to his friend. I want more already. It was hard to stop, and the perspective of taking another bite is just... too tempting. I grab him, and bite again. I'm glad for the heels, I'm the right height for his neck. He tastes about the same as his friend. I try to focus on the taste a bit more, but all I want is just more of this. I don't feel anywhere near satiated. I just drink, and drink... It's so good. I feel shivers down my whole body. Remember to stop, you idiot. Just one more... just a bit... He won't die if I take one more, right? Just another sip...

"Care to share, Sweetheart?"

I stop. I release my prey, who falls at my feet, unconscious but, thankfully, alive. I hiss at the stranger, a reflex that comes naturally. I can feel the blood dripping down my chin, but that's the least of my worries.

The stranger walks slowly towards me, and all I can see are his fangs shining, and that haughty smile. Who the fuck is that? And where is Bart?

"We have a new girl in town," he chuckles. "Only newborns are such messy eaters, too."

I glance down. One of my victims is unconscious on the sidewalk, the other is still standing there, in a daze. I'd say I did alright for a second time. I don't move. Bart said nothing about other vampires, but I am guessing this is the trouble he was talking about. What do I do? I have a creepy feeling running up my back. Should I run? Or can I tell him I'm with Bart? Shit, I have no idea. That might make things worse... That guy slowly steps closer, and I feel nothing but ill intent coming from him. I carefully walk away from my preys.

"You should have stayed away," he hisses. "We don't like competition...."

He doesn't even glance at my victims, he just walks past them and towards me. Fuck, fuck, fuck... What do I do? Bart, you liar!

"...Stay the fuck away from me," I hiss.

"Oh, I wish I could, darling, but newcomers need a good lesson. Looks like there's one too many vampires in London..."

"You're welcome to leave," I retort.

"Watch how you speak to your elders!"

I feel a sudden pressure pining me where I stand, and the fear gets worse. Shit. I can't move. I'm starting to shake, and I can't even move my lips to hiss or tell him to fuck off. I'm scared. Really, really scared. This is not as strong as Richard or Bart's pressure, but this guy's intent is to kill me, and I have no immunity against that murderous aura. My whole body is screaming to run away, as far as possible from here, but I can't move. A voice in my head is screaming, I'm going to die. I can't die, not again. Not so soon.

Move, move, move! I'm fighting with every single bit of my body to ignore that bastard's domination. I got to get the fuck away. He's getting closer, and he's going to kill me. Move, Hera, move!