

1.

I crouched in the reeking alleyway anticipating his next move. I smelled the decaying food scraps in the dumpster to my immediate right, and it didn't take any supernatural senses to know that the pickup was about three days overdue. I heard a lone rat scurry from behind that dumpster, alerted to my presence only by its primal survival instincts. Animals sense predators, and that's what I was. He; however, was not my prey. Tonight, I hunted Monsters.

I've been called many things in my existence besides predator. Murderer. Vigilante. Hunter. Avenger. Protector. Only once was I called victim, and I owe my current existence to the ones who victimized me.

I heard my target emerge from the shadowed doorway as the pretty little teenage girl walked past. He stalked quietly behind her at a distance that was innocuous enough that she didn't notice. Ugh. Do girls these days not hear the lectures about roaming the city alone at night? I mean – what if I wasn't here? Never mind, I know exactly what would happen if I wasn't here – and that's the very reason I am.

She walked over to the dark abandoned parking lot (of course) with her keys still in her purse (are you kidding me?) and fumbled through the massive bag with her hand buried inside to the elbow searching for her fob to unlock the doors. She didn't hear his shoes crunch in the gravel. She was completely surprised when he wrapped his hand around her face to silence her scream preemptively and his other pushed her in the car. This dude had practice. Excellent.

As surprised as she was to see him she was shocked as hell to see me. I grabbed the man by the hair on the back of his head and ripped him off her and out of the car in one snatch. I threw him over my shoulder fireman style and, to her eyes, disappeared into thin air.

2.

The scene had been so familiar to me it both terrified and disgusted me. I had been that girl. Once, a hundred years ago.

No - literally – a hundred years ago...

*I was walking home in the winter of 1908 from my job at the local watering hole. My petticoat and lace ensemble making the walk treacherous but at least I was warm, Georgia winters really do get wicked cold. I wasn't paying attention to my surroundings – classic mistake in any century – and a drunk from the bar who I had evidently titillated grabbed me from behind. He dragged me to a grimy dilapidated shack that I learned he and his buddies used to hang out and get drunk.*

*He beat me. He raped me. His friends beat and raped me. I must have been there for a week.*

*Occasionally one of the men would give me some dirty water or a swig of whisky – Pity? Humanity? I doubt it. Who cares. It's not like I wanted to live to endure it anymore.*

*It seemed they would never tire of their plaything tied up on the floor in the other room. I prayed for death. Their death, my death, it didn't matter, all that mattered was that I just could not take one more night of the beatings or the days of lying there freezing on the floor cowering at every creak the shanty made.*

*But then Death did come.*

*Not like you'd think. I didn't go into (what I now know is) shock and die. No sheriff charged in guns blazing.*

*No, Death stole into the dwelling silently, surprising the Monsters that were in the front room with his speed and viciousness. He disposed of them quickly and efficiently. He did not dispose of them quietly though, I heard their screams, their bones snapping, their pleas of mercy. HA! I rejoiced in their pain and anguish! It was like being in church that is full of the Holy Spirit; parishioners raising their voices in joyful noise for the Lord above. It was like children's laughter and a rainstorm after the summer draughts. It was the most wonderful and glorious sound I had ever heard. I didn't for a moment fear that I would soon make those sounds – as long as the Monsters were dead and gone nothing could hurt me as badly. Their screams were sweet relief. When they fell silent I wept with joy and beckoned Death to find me, and he did.*

*Yeah... after that it was pretty much a blur for the next few months. I figured out through trial and error that Death was a Vampire. I don't know if he came to save me or if he stumbled on my Monsters by accident or convenience. I don't know why he spared me, why he saved me or why he turned me. When I regained some semblance of rational thought it was spring of 1909, I looked like a feral cat and Oh My GAWD did I stink. I don't know if it was animal or human blood clotting all over my clothes and hair – still don't – but I didn't really care – still don't, mostly. I gathered myself up, took stock of my current situation and after a little soul searching decided the best thing I could do at that moment was find a place to wash my damn hair.*

3.

With tonight's Monster is over my shoulder and I am flying, not literally flying in the air but *flying* as in moving too quickly for human eyes to register my movements, to my hidey-hole. Ironic that I feel safest in a locale so reminiscent of my birthplace? Maybe. Maybe I'll talk to my therapist when I see her, you know – right after Hell freezes over.

I waited for him to regain consciousness. It took a while; I can pack quite a wallop when I'm pissed, and was *seriously* pissed. A hundred years of watching the humans destroy each other: rapists, child molesters, wife beaters. Not only was I angry, I was revolted. The things human beings did to each other absolutely disgusted me.

They had everything.

They had the sun.

They had love.

They had peace.

Yet, it wasn't enough.

And God? The creator of all. Infinite and all powerful, The personification and embodiment of pure and total love? God created humans who did this to each other. And human monsters weren't enough, there are things even worse prowling the night, and I was only one of them.

Where is God in that?

Was he in my room with us? Was he watching this human slowly become aware of his fate? Was he watching as the man's eyes grew accustomed to the dark and the look of fear spread across his face? Did

God think "Now he knows how those women felt. This is fair. This is just. Eye for an Eye. Life for a life."

Did God enjoy the show?

4.

*So after I washed my hair, myself and my clothes I realized that my attire was beyond salvage. I found a clothes line filled with freshly washed and newly mended men's work clothes. I grabbed a shirt and trousers and quick as a wink I had made myself presentable – well, as presentable as I could. Luckily it was dark (ha!) so I went about my business undetected, but I could hear a woman inside the house tending to her brood. Three young boys and a new baby (sex undetermined – all babies sound the same) going about their normal human lives. And then I heard a man. Her husband, I presumed, who had far exceeded the recommended daily dose of whisky, sounded like a awfully mean drunk. Well, that'd explain why she had left her wash out in the yard. It obviously wasn't part of a great Fledgling Vampire Big Sister Outreach Charity.*

*That was my first coherent kill. I must have killed before this night, seeing as how I was still alive, but this is the one that I will always remember.*

*I could smell the whiskey through the walls of their modest little house and the sour smell rang in my head like a siren, when I closed my eyes I was lying on the floor of that shack and could hear the men in the front room. I felt the grit of the dirt floor on my cheek and the burn of the ropes on my wrists. My cries were echoing in my skull, louder and louder and when I opened my eyes I realized that it wasn't my wails I was hearing, but a chorus of scared children's. I saw him strike the largest boy, then his wife when she intervened in the child's behalf. Then he turned once again to his son. His child. His flesh and blood and bone. I saw death in him.*

*Rule #1 – you don't hurt kids.*

*Simple, right? Too bad they are my rules and not everyone else's because that leaves me to enforce them.*

*Twist my arm, right?*

*I had no plan; in that moment I didn't even have a clear memory of how I'd survived before that night. I didn't really know how to kill a man (that clearly needed killin'). I did have my instincts and a small sense of the massive power I held within me. I could feel it like a coiled spring, or a panther waiting to pounce. So much kinetic energy just waiting to be converted into frenetic with nothing but my will as the catalyst. And best of all I did have a pretty good idea of what I wanted to do.*