

Sanguinary

Chapter 1

Vampires. I have always had a thing about Vampires. I can remember the exact moment when the fascination began. I was thirteen and my older sister had hired The Lost Boys on video, she was unimpressed but I fell totally in unrequited love with the lead vampire character. I had been gutted, as only a teenager can be, when at the end of the film the vampires, including my hero, were killed. I watched that film at every opportunity, bought the soundtrack and wore the t-shirt. I am not by nature a romantic soul but vampires inspire quixotic notions inside me. I would dream of being held in a vampire's strong arms, swooning and being tilted backwards into that classic deadly pose. He would stare into my eyes and I would fall passionately in love with this dark man. I would see his own needs flash through his eyes; hot desire yet flecked with tenderness, followed by hunger and need. Then he would drink my blood. I suppose then I would die and that was where the fantasy went a bit pear-

shaped.

Vampires dominated my fantasies whilst I was a teenager and a decade later I still watched every vampire movie, read every vampire book. I found new vampire heroes, yet none of them lived up to David of The Lost Boys, who was my first vampire love but he wouldn't be the last. That one came in an altogether different vampiric package.

One day it seemed there was a chance of my dreams becoming reality. Someone told me of some rumours about the existence of a type of real, modern day vampire and I was deeply intrigued. I was also told that they were alleged to inhabit the city where I lived and worked, which left me needing to know more. And I was being asked to seek them out. I had no idea where it would take me, didn't even think about the consequences at the time. I just followed my curiosity, spurred on by thoughts of getting a career break. I didn't have a clue how much it would change things, how it would change me. Some things might have turned out the way that they did anyway. Some events that were to unfold had been put into motion before I even found them. Maybe I was destined to come out the other side more damaged. Maybe if things hadn't happened the way that they did I wouldn't have even come out the other side alive.

The day that my venture into the unknown began

was as any other. The alarm went off, I hit the snooze button more than once and was then running late for work. Taking time to drink a coffee in order to be able to function enough to actually get to work, I had little time left to get myself ready. This meant that I didn't have the time to tame my wild red hair even slightly. It was usually a lost fight anyway, having naturally curly hair that just wanted to be feral. I ended up being the usual ten minutes late at the office. Not that anybody noticed, because I wasn't high enough in the food chain to be deemed as important. Except for when somebody wanted something, something really essential like biscuits for a meeting. My role there could only be described as a lowly gopher, ready to run any errands like an over-enthusiastic idiot in the vain hope that someone would suddenly realise my full potential and give me a proper job.

My real passion lay in writing fiction. I've always dreamed of becoming a writer since I was young. Even as a child I was spinning out fictional stories, scrawling them down in little hardback books. I still spent a lot of time writing, but unfortunately the very nice rejection letters that I kept getting sent did not pay the bills. Therefore I had to seek other ways of subsidising my dreams. This usually involved jobs in pubs or supermarkets, but as I was twenty-five and still receiving rejection slips I felt that it was about time

I pursued a back up career. When I say 'I felt as though I should' it was more like I felt under pressure from my family to do something more constructive. I decided that I would try to be a journalist, at least it would still be in the writing field and I would never stop writing my fiction anyway. I would still do it for myself, even if nobody else wanted to read it, or pay me for it.

Although, regrettably, no-one seemed to want to give me a job as a journalist either. I had been to university and had managed, somehow with all the drinking and partying, to gain reasonable qualifications. But I kept getting that word 'experience' thrown at me, or rather lack of it. So I took any job that was available as long as it was actually in a newspaper office. That is how my wonderful dogsbody occupation came about. At least it was a foot in the door, I told myself. And it paid the bills. Well, it kept me in alcohol whilst the bills piled up on my shelf.

When I arrived at my desk I picked up a copy of that mornings edition of 'The Post'. The headline on the front page screamed at me; 'Vampire Attack'. My stomach gave a little lurch. There was a photo of an attractive woman, her name, Samantha Davies, was written in bold print beneath the picture. I sat down at my desk and read the article, turning to page four for the full story. Her body had been found the previous day in woodland on the outskirts of the city. The

newspaper stated that there had been no apparent trauma to the body, other than two wounds in her neck. She had bled to death. Suddenly the vampire headline made sense. She had last been seen in a nightclub in Cardiff city centre, although the article didn't mention which one it was. I was stunned, it was very close to home.

I was so engrossed in the details of the report that I didn't notice a presence at my desk until I heard a sharp cough. I looked up startled. Brenda, Personal Assistant to the Editor, told me that the Editor wanted to see me. I was taken aback; Tom Brandt, the Editor had never spoken to me. At all. Ever. Not even a 'hello' as he passed my desk. I wasn't sure if he even knew that I existed.

I made my way to his office, followed by Brenda whose desk was outside his door. I thought that maybe I was being sacked for my continual lateness. With a polite knock I entered his office.

He looked up at me and without a greeting he handed me a flyer for a nightclub. 'You ever go there?'

I looked at the piece of paper, the nightclub was 'Domain' and I began to wonder if this was a work-related query or a social one. He didn't look the type to go to a nightclub like the one on the flyer in my hand. In fact he did not look like the type to be going to any nightclub, I thought that his nightclubbing days had long since ended. I

couldn't imagine them as ever having existed in the first place.

'Yes, often,' I replied.

'Good, then I have a job for you, some research,' he said and threw a newspaper at me, the same one that I had been reading when Brenda found me.

'You've read the article?' he asked and I nodded. 'Well, as you know the body was found yesterday, she had bled to death. The local community is in uproar and rumours are becoming rampant. What I'm interested in are so-called "real vampires",' Tom said. 'I've heard from a source that there are people in the alternative community in this city who actually drink blood. It sounds like a good lead and I need someone to do some research, someone who will fit in.'

A reference to my appearance, which I suppose could be described by someone like Tom as 'different'; no actually he wouldn't have been that polite. I have several piercings and tattoos, wild red hair and a penchant for unusual clothes. But I didn't care if his comment was meant to be derogatory, I liked the way that I looked; if I didn't then I wouldn't have chosen to look that way.

Besides that, all I could think about it was that I was being offered more than a merely a foot in the door. I was being offered a chance to prove myself. I suppose the mention of real vampires existing would send some people into

astonishment, perhaps fear. But as I've already said, I love the whole notion of vampires. The thought of vampires actually existing in any form was fascinating to me. I remembered seeing a documentary on the television about real vampires, otherwise normal people who claimed to drink blood. It had been based in America though. I hadn't even considered the possibility that they could exist in this country.

Tom gestured at the flyer again, which was advertising a live band that was going to be playing at the club that night. The band's name was "Erebis". I've heard word from a source of mine that members of this band are blood drinkers. I just want you to go down there, ask around, see what you can find out. This is all highly confidential you must remember. My source wants it kept that way, they don't want anything coming back on them.'

'And then what?' I asked, staring at the black Gothic lettering on the paper in my hand.

'You pass all your information onto one of our writers who will do the story,' he stated. 'If it's worth doing.'

I narrowed my eyes, in other words he was suggesting that I do all the work and someone else gets the story.

'I'll do it,' I said. 'But I want to write the story.'

'I hardly think that you're experienced enough,' he said, with a sneer on his face that I felt like

punching off.

You're asking me to do this, something that could be regarded as dangerous work. All I'm asking for is a chance to do the writing too. You'll see it. If it's no good, then someone else can do it,' I said, my nails dug into my palm in anger that I tried to keep hidden.

He nodded, although his expression did not convey approval, more annoyance. 'Okay, a chance,' he offered.

He flicked a finger in the direction of the door and turned to look at his computer screen, dismissing me.

'Yes!' I said as I walked out the door, gaining me several glances from people at their desks. I thought that I was at last being given a big chance and all I had to do was not mess it up. My sister would say that messing things up was one of my specialities.

My only previous experience of vampires was in the fictional world and I already had a good idea that these so-called "real vampires" would be a whole different genre. Therefore I needed more information, and where better to go to get information on absolutely anything than the internet? I found an available computer and logged on. I typed the words "real vampires" into a search engine and sure enough loads of web pages came up. I was amazed that information on

something that only five minutes earlier I had hardly even heard of was so widely available. The sites were made up of support groups for these real vampires and general information for the open minded and curious. I spent most of the day searching through the sites, noting down information, stopping only when other workers requested me to do something, like make them some coffee, which I usually did with resentment anyway. I absolutely hated waiting on those people. My teeth were gritted more than usual that day because I was already becoming addicted to finding out more and didn't want to be away from the computer.

I had found a world of blood-drinking and I prepared myself to enter that world. I did wonder why I had never sought it out before. Excitement was building inside me at the thought of it. At that time I did not really have any idea just how deep I would end up in it.

What I found was that these real vampires or Sanguinarians, as some sites referred to them, were nothing like the movies. They alleged to drink blood, but only the blood of willing donors, not from victims attacked in the streets. They didn't drain people's blood and leave them for dead but took the few mouthfuls that they claimed to need and cleaned the donor's wounds. I used this to allay any fears I had about the recent murder. The people that I learnt about on the internet were

not killers who murdered innocent victims for their blood. Then again, there are probably exceptions to every rule.

Next, having spent the day information gathering, I needed to prepare for the night. Prepare myself that was. I thought that I may have to conjure up a few feminine whiles to get close to the band. I stood in front of my wardrobe, which consisted of mainly black with a few splashes of red, contemplating. I eventually decided on tight jeans and a cropped top that displayed both my pierced belly button and the tattoo of a rose that I have towards the left of my stomach. I finished off the ensemble with a pair of killer high-heel boots. I made little effort with my hair, just let it do its own thing, and applied my make-up the way I usually did; plenty of black eye shadow and then carefully ringing my green eyes with black kohl and putting on dark red lipstick.

Once finished I appraised my appearance in the mirror. I decided that the look didn't exactly live up to my angelic name. But then again my behaviour very rarely did either. I think my parents must have made a serious judgement error when they called their second born daughter Angel. I smiled at my reflection. The end result may not have been angelic but I hoped that it would be enough to impress a vampire.

My flat is a mere ten minute walk away from the

city centre. Getting a taxi for such a short distance seemed extravagant but probably would have been safer. I didn't normally think twice about walking but it was in my mind that a young woman had been murdered in the city only a few days ago. I didn't exactly earn a fortune though so I decided to stick with the cheaper option. After pulling on my long black coat I locked my apartment door, went down the stairs and out onto the street. It was already dark outside and the December air was freezing.

It was only a short walk before I was caught up in the buzz of the city centre. People from all persuasions made their way to their preferred destinations. All were catered for in the throng of pubs and nightclubs. I made my way through the city, away from the mainstream clubs, to the darker streets, where Domain was located.

The bouncers nodded in acknowledgement at me as I walked in, I smiled back. Domain opened its doors at eight o'clock, entry is free before ten. As I usually go there most nights I always make sure that I arrive before ten as I wouldn't have been able to subsidise that entry fee as well as alcohol. I had worked in Domain once, it hadn't gone well, working in a bar never really suited me. Too much temptation.

The club was dark, and darkness tended to be a theme with the punters too. Heavy rock music was blaring as I entered. The dress code was

mainly black, lots of chains and leather. This was not a place for the trendy boys and girls out on the pull.

I glanced around the club; its familiarity gave me confidence. This place was near enough my second home. I spent a lot of time there, maybe even more time than I did at my flat.

As usual, my first stop upon arrival was the bar. I made eye contact with David, one of the barmen. He was serving somebody else but he smiled and came to me next. David was a very old friend of mine, onetime childhood sweetheart.

Without me asking he passed me a bottle of lager and I handed over the money.

'I hear that you have a new band playing here tonight,' I said as casually as possible to David.

'Yeah, Erebis,' David replied. The bar wasn't busy at that hour but he was working alone so he had to turn away and serve someone else. 'Be back in a minute,' he said, smiling at me. I smiled back but didn't wait at the bar for him to come back to talk to me.

The flyer that Brandt had given me had said that Erebis were due to begin at about eleven o'clock so I had time to mingle awhile. I walked around, drinking my icy cold lager, which was quite satisfying. I spoke to a few people that I knew, killing time.

I went up the stairs to the second level which led to a slightly quieter area which was filled with

seating. By quieter I mean that you could actually talk to someone without screaming to be heard over the loud music. It was still loud enough to feel the bass thud in your chest.

There was a balcony towards the back of the room. It was the same shape as the performing area below and if you looked over the edge you would be looking down on the stage. It must have seemed like a good idea when the club was designed. Unfortunately for bands that didn't go down too well with the crowd, it was also a good vantage point for hurling missiles at the unlucky musicians. After a particularly nasty incident, where a glass bottle had actually hit an unfortunate bassist, only plastic drinking vessels were allowed upstairs. There was a bouncer positioned at the bottom of the stairs to make sure that nobody took any bottles up there and the upper level bar only served drinks in plastic cups. This didn't stop bands getting lager tipped over them from the heavens from time to time but at least plastic didn't do as much damage as glass. By the way, the afore mentioned bassist survived the incident, although I understand he ended up at the hospital with a nasty concussion. The band never played at Domain again, although it is unclear whether that was the clubs or the bands decision.

I went to the balcony and looked over. The stage was in relative darkness but I could see that

the band's equipment had already been set up. There were no people on the stage at that moment though.

My drink had long since gone. There was also a bar on the second level so I made my way there to get another drink. As I walked around the club I kept an eye out for my best friend Minnie, who I usually went there with, or if not found her there. For once I was grateful not to see her. If she had have been there then it could have complicated things. I didn't want to have to explain my work mission to her. Stealth is not her style.

My second drink was transferred to a plastic cup, which never tastes quite the same as drinking it straight from the bottle. With the drink in my hand I went back to the balcony. The music had changed to Slipknot. The mosh pit (the area at the front of the stage where the dancing is particularly raucous and where stage diving and crowd surfing usually take place) was looking ferocious. Even though in my lofty position I would have had a good view of the stage, I wanted to be closer when the band actually started. I drained my cup and went back downstairs. As I descended I saw someone who I particularly wanted to avoid, a guy who I had very recently had a fling with and I wasn't in the mood to speak to him. Things had ended badly so I quickly changed direction and managed to evade him.

Once back on ground level, with a detour to the

bar, I made my way towards the stage. I walked carefully around the edge of the mosh pit, trying not to end up getting dragged into the middle, which can often happen. I found myself a safe spot right at the front but to the side of the stage.

My drink had disappeared quickly, I was getting impatient and thinking about going back to the bar for another when the music stopped suddenly. The following minutes were far from silent as people continued talking loudly, having been so used to it from shouting to each other to be heard over the music.

The DJ spoke into his microphone, 'We have a new band performing in Domain tonight. Welcome to Erebis.'

The stage was dark and nothing stirred. The chattering continued for a while until people started to wonder why there was no music and conversations died off. Even the mosh pit stilled. A strange quiet descended slowly and an air of expectation began to build. All this for a band that most people had never even heard of.

The hush went on a while longer and most people's attention was given to the stage. All lights in the club dimmed more than they already had been.

Through the darkness the deep thump of the bass drum began. A repetitive sound that I could feel thudding in my chest like a heartbeat. It continued alone for a few minutes, building the

sense of anticipation. The bass guitar joined the drums, adding rhythm but holding the constant beat. The build up was slow and I found myself getting caught up in the excitement. The crowd remained extraordinarily silent for a club. Then the lead guitar began, shaping the song more but keeping the same steady pace. The stage was still in darkness, no musicians could be seen. The music snaked out of the shadows. The three instruments continued, yet people did not become impatient, the steady tempo seemed to have them hypnotised. And as the pace of the drums increased I found my heartbeat picking up with it.

The stage lights beamed suddenly, illuminating the whole stage but there was only one thing that caught my eyes. A figure was standing in the centre of the stage, his back to the crowd, arms spread out wide, his head bowed forward, one leg crossed in front of the other. Black, tousled hair reached past his shoulders to his bare back, he was wearing only black leather trousers. A tattoo reached right across and halfway down his back, from shoulder blade to shoulder blade. It was a bat, wings splayed out. The lights were on for only seconds, and then it was dark again. A few more heartbeats to the rhythm of the drum and the lights were back, this time the singer had turned to face his audience. His eyes were fixed on some point at the back of the room, above the heads of the people below him, both of his hands gripped

the microphone stand. He began to sing, his voice deep yet soft, a whispering caress that I felt physically; a shudder went through me.

He stopped, ran a hand through his hair and looked towards the back of the stage. There was a second of silence as the music paused with him. And then kicked back in heavy. The tempo of the song was turned up and the guitars screamed. The singer grabbed the microphone from its stand and bent forward slightly as he began to sing again. His voice had changed completely, this time he was screaming the words, his voice raw, harsher with a growling edge. A cheer rose from the crowd and the mosh pit went wild at the thrashing rhythm of the song. He didn't smile, did not acknowledge the appreciation. He maintained an arrogant look and continued his singing as if no one but him existed in the room.

I could do nothing but stand and stare in amazement at the sheer essence of him. He was absolutely stunning. His bare chest and stomach were well-defined with muscle. He just had *it*. That certain something that could make him a rock god. He had the arrogant demeanour to go with it; that said he knew it. But there was an edge to him too, even from a distance there was something in his eyes that said he wasn't one that I would want to cross. I was mesmerised by him.

I tried to take a moment to appreciate the effort that the rest of the band were putting in. They

played hard, even though they were in the shadow of the singer. As a whole they were completely amazing. I reminded myself that I wasn't there as a music critic but as a journalist. I also realised that I wasn't the only one who was captivated by him, there were a growing number of groupies gathering around the edge of the mosh pit. Attractive girls, hoping to catch his attention. But the singer's eyes never met another's. His gaze went through the crowd, sometimes he stared straight ahead but his intense eyes never rested on anyone. The band were going down well with others who were actually interested in the music. People were dancing and cheering. Their first song ended and already they seemed to have won over the audience.

The next song began, this time coming straight in with heavy guitars and drums. I turned my attention to the guitarist, who was nearest to me on the left of the stage. He had dark spiked hair which turned to red at the ends. He looked more like he was enjoying himself than the singer did, he had a hint of a smile and a wicked glimmer in his eyes. From my angle I couldn't see the drummer very well at the back of the stage, just a bleached blonde head. The bassist was thin with long straight dark hair, he looked serious, his gaze was mostly directed at his guitar. It wasn't long before my eyes were back at the singer, who was stalking the stage. At one point he came right over

to the left of the stage where I was. Closer up I could see he had a number of other tattoos. There was an ankh on his left bicep and some letters running down the inside of his right arm. He has numerous others that I didn't get the chance to observe, as he went down on one knee, bent over the microphone and sang intensely. The girls next to me screamed and hands reached out to touch him. And even though I believed I was above such things, I yearned to reach out for him too. To run my fingers down his sweat slicked chest. I held back though and a moment later he had strutted to the other side of the stage. And I could breathe again.

They played tight and they played hard. No missiles fell from the balcony above.

I didn't move until Erebis finished their set and then not for some time afterwards. The DJ began playing music but for a short while there was an air of despondency where the crowd seemed disappointed that the band had left. It didn't last and soon the mosh pit was manic again.

Feeling strangely deflated, I made my way to the toilets; three bottles of lager and an hour watching the stage had left me quite desperate. Afterwards I was intending on getting myself another drink whilst I pondered my next move. After visiting the toilets I saw the singer was already waiting at the bar. He was still wearing the leather trousers, but he had covered up the previously bare torso with a

black t-shirt. There were a couple of girls who had also noticed him. They were watching him and talking to each other, giggling. They seemed to be goading each other into approaching him. I had no time to waste, I had to get to him first.

Taking a deep breath I walked over and stood next to him at the bar.

'Hey,' I said.

He didn't look at me, he continued staring straight ahead, waiting to be served. He seemed much bigger close up than he had on the stage. He was tall and strongly built.

'Can I get you a drink? I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed your gig,' I said, raising my voice to be heard above the music. I hoped that I didn't sound too much like a groupie. On the subject of which, I noticed that the other two girls were moving a little closer. As I glanced at them I saw that their previous laughter had stopped, they looked quite annoyed that someone had gotten to the gorgeous singer first.

'Yeah, I'll have a whisky,' he said, still not looking at me, which made me feel even more like a groupie. But, ah his voice, his speaking voice was just as mesmerising and beautiful as his singing voice even in that one short sentence.

I asked the barman for two whiskies, thankful that it wasn't David. Whilst the drinks were being poured I watched him in the mirrors on the back wall of the bar. Vampire or not he definitely cast a

reflection. But that wasn't the main thing that I concluded...to go with the body of a god he also had the face of an angel. A fallen, dark, dangerous angel. He was impossibly beautiful with sharp cheek bones, a strong jaw and a full firm, very kissable mouth. He stared straight ahead, not once had he even acknowledged me with so much as a glance and I was beginning to think that there was a downside to his looks. He seemed an arrogant bastard.

The barman put the drinks on the bar and I handed over the money. He knocked his drink back in one gulp and I did the same, feeling the fiery liquid slide all the way down my throat and into my stomach. It felt pretty damn good. He banged his glass back down and then he turned to me and caught me with his eyes that were deep and dark. His eyelids were coloured with black shadow and his eyes lined with black kohl which emphasised their darkness.

As our eyes met something happened that I didn't expect. It was an actual physical jolt, some strange connection that unnerved me. I had never experienced anything like it before. I didn't believe in love, never mind love at first sight. I'd experienced lust at first sight many times. That moment when my eyes would meet with somebody else's and there would be an instant physical attraction, an immediate wanting. A need that could be easily sated by having them, which I

usually did. But the moment my eyes met with his my stomach lurched so much that I felt sick, but it wasn't just physical. There was something that clicked deep inside me. And I'm not talking about feeling horny, although there was that too. Something much deeper than sex. I had no idea what any of it was but it left me shaken. It almost brought me to my knees.

Before our eyes had locked he had seemed infallible but there was a momentary look of surprise on his face and I thought that he must have felt something too. It fleeted across his features though and it only took a heartbeat for his expression to change back to arrogant again.

I tried to go on sounding confident, but there was a tremor in my voice. 'Well, I hope to be able to see you. . .' I gave him a smile and purposely gazed down his body and back up to meet his eyes, which only gave me another jolt, no less powerful the second time. '. . .perform again sometime.'

He didn't smile, just nodded imperceptibly with a slight frown. I walked away, my heart pounding. How I had managed to stay cool I didn't know. I tried to fight the urge to turn back to look at him. But I had an irresistible need to see him again. I also wanted to know if those other girls had approached him. I wasn't sure why it bothered me so much when I found that they had. The girls were talking to him, giggling again now that I had

gone. But his dark eyes were still on me.

The incident with the singer had left me feeling unsettled and confused. Whatever was supposed to have happened that wasn't it and it had left me wondering what to do next. I knew that I couldn't approach him again, he had barely spoken one word to me the first time. And the effect that he had on me scared me a little. It was not an emotion that many men provoked in me.

I was thinking about looking for another member of the band, someone a bit more approachable. But I needed a drink first.

The club was becoming busier and there was a large crowd packed around the bar. Some waiting to be served and others having been served standing around chatting. Cursing to myself, I was trying to shove my way through to the bar when a hand closed on my arm and I was pulled through the crowd towards the edge. I ended up against the wall and someone pressed their body close to mine. I was about to tell the body to piss off when I looked up into those dark eyes. He pressed one arm against the wall, almost pinning me there and as people shoved past behind him his body was pushed even closer into mine. I didn't need to look into his eyes to feel that strange surge because this time he was touching me. My body pulsed at his touch, he was setting me on fire.

'I didn't thank you for the drink earlier,' he said.

'No problem,' I replied and attempted a smile, which felt shaky.

'What's your name?' he asked, staring intently at me.

'Angel,' I said. I was feeling strangely intimidated and flustered and was hoping that it didn't show. Despite trying not to come across as a desperate groupie I didn't think that I was giving that impression.

'Angel,' he repeated and seemed to ponder this for a moment, except he didn't come out with the corny lines that I usually hear when I tell people my name. I was close enough to see his teeth, his canines were slightly more pointed and prominent but nothing more than some people have naturally. And they actually looked pretty damn sexy. I had to fight off an image of them nipping at my neck otherwise my composure would have been completely lost.

'I'm Ash. I was just going to take you up on your earlier offer. We'll be playing at The Vault tomorrow, if you're interested.'

'Very,' I said, he was so close that I could feel his breath on my face. His eyes were magnetic and I couldn't pull myself away.

'Maybe I could give you a private performance afterwards,' he said, without a leer that probably would have been evident in any other man with that comment. He just looked cool and confident.

Which is what I was supposed to have been, except that I was rapidly turning to mush under his intense gaze and the closeness of his strong lean body.

'Now that sounds. . .' I dropped my eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath. Back up to meet his eyes, another bolt of lightning. '. . .good.'

'I'll see you then, Angel.'

He leaned in towards me and for a moment I thought that he was going to kiss me, he was so close. He didn't though, he just looked at me closely one last time and walked away. I stayed leaning against the wall for support, my heart pounding. I was actually disappointed that he hadn't kissed me and I had to remind myself that I wasn't there looking for a date. I was working.

On wobbly legs I made it to the bar and asked for another Jack Daniels, this time David served me. This one I slugged back too, not so fiery this time and it did manage to calm my nerves slightly.

David raised an eyebrow at me, 'Not your usual drink.'

'No,' I replied. 'Pour me another.'

He did and it went down the same way. I let out a breath and I felt a little calmer.

'Look, Angel I know you'll probably tell me to piss off but as a friend I just want to warn you,' David said, he leaned over the bar close to me and lowered his voice. 'I noticed you talking to that guy earlier.'

'Who? Ash?' I asked, enjoying saying his name out loud.

'Yeah, well you should know that word is they are some sort of vampires,' he said, his voice low as if he shared a conspiracy.

'Vampires?' I feigned shock.

'Yeah supposedly they drink blood. And you know, what with these murders at the moment you should be careful.'

'Do they drink the blood of young virgins?' I asked.

'I wouldn't know,' David said, irritation apparent in his voice and his face, he then glanced around as someone was calling to be served.

'If so, I should be okay, it's a long time since I could be described as a virgin,' I said and laughed. He should have known, as it had been him that I had lost my virginity with.

He scowled at me, looking genuinely annoyed at my indifference. With a slight shake of his head he went to serve other customers. His reaction did unnerve me though, maybe I did have something to worry about, dealing with these people. Maybe my lack of virginity wouldn't save me. Besides, I thought, if I had been a virgin I wouldn't have remained one after too long in Ash's company.