

## London's Night Stalkers

### An Introduction

**“Top predator, pinnacle of the food chain. Yet you’ve probably queued with one of them to get a coffee, without realising. They’re real, they’re dangerous, but they’re also very good at appearing to be..... Ordinary.”**

»

You could easily walk past Simon on the streets of North London and not even notice him. There was a green tinge to his eyes that had gained him a few female admirers, but he was completely ignored by the queues using the ATMs near Wood Green Tube Station. He was just another skinny guy in a hoody, probably in his late twenties. He’d lived in London since nineteen-oh-seven and millions of people had gone about their business and ignored Simon Atherton. None of them had realised that the ordinary looking young man, with the unsettling green eyes, was a vampire.

“This one has run out of cash.”

Crap, he wasn’t joining another queue. Anyway, he didn’t live that far away; a mini-cab home was just being lazy and wasting money. Simon walked back towards the station and turned left, walking around the back of Wood Green Shopping City. The area wasn’t too bad. The general seediness suited Simon Atherton; it meant people had their own problems. There were a lot of crappy flats and a fluid population. No one noticed an ordinary looking guy, who kept himself to himself.

Simon automatically sniffed the air and picked up the wonderful tang of blood. He wasn’t hungry, but like most predators, he rarely missed an opportunity to feed. The tang in the air was too strong to be from a minor accident, he just hoped it wasn’t a car crash. Those just worked up his hunger, with too many police around to do anything about it.

There were a few streets of council housing, but the scent of fresh blood took him beyond those streets and towards a small parade of shops.

“Well, if he thinks I’m chasing after him.....”

Two girls passed him, barely registering his presence. Top predator, pinnacle of the food chain and they just carried on walking. That was fine, that was how his kind survived. Simon lived in the shadows, causing few waves and doing his best to be....ordinary. The blood was making him feel hungry and it wasn’t far away.

Damn, the door at the rear of the building was locked, they usually were. Simon had been around since the thirteenth century, there was a fair chance his fingerprints were on a few police databases. He had gloves though, three pairs of surgical gloves, folded up in an inside pocket. There were lots of myths about vampires, but the extra-strength was true. Simon pushed the door until the lock broke away, taking a piece of the doorframe with it. Noisy, but there had been no alternative. Stairs in front of him, he appeared to have opened a rear exit from a basement of some kind.

She’d heard him break open the door ! A female voice, barely audible and the sound of clanking chains. Things were becoming a little gothic, even for a vampire approaching his seven hundred and forty second birthday. He didn’t call out to her, he wasn’t there to reassure her, or make her feel better. With luck, he’d drain her dry of blood and be home before dawn. Not that light damaged him, he just preferred the night. Bright daylight stung his eyes, made him sneeze and sometimes feel a little nauseous, but he could still function.

“It’s a bit like hay fever for humans.” Clara had once said. “But sadly, there are no antihistamines for it.”

Clara was a vampire too, a thin wisp of a thing with vivid green eyes. Green eyes was something they all had, to one degree or another, hers were almost luminous. She was the closest thing he had to a proper relationship and they'd tried to kill each other a few times.

His hearing was better than when he'd been human, all his senses were sharper. Not good enough to hear her clearly though, as she struggled against being chained up. There was another locked door, which he easily forced open.

"Help me."

Someone had hurt her, quite badly. Still plenty of life in the girl though and enough blood to have made his efforts worthwhile.

"Why should I?"

The chains go through manacles on her wrists, to be wrapped round some thick water pipes. Whoever had left her there, had done a thorough job of making sure she couldn't escape. Maybe the chains were part of his thing, or hers, some women were into that sort of thing. Simon had his own quirks, far worse than any Wood Green sadist was likely to dream up.

"He'll be back." She said.

So, her tormentor was male, how predictable. Simon often despaired of finding anything new to excite him. He knelt and looked into her eyes, seeing no fear, just sadness. He kissed her lips, licking the blood that had congealed on her chin. Wonderful, though all blood tasted that way. During his early days as a vampire, he'd fed on a man in the terminal stage of leprosy. It was an experiment, the blood had tasted good and caused him no harm. Since then he'd fed on the young, old, healthy and diseased. All blood was good blood!

"How do you know he'll be back?" He asked.

"He always come back late at night. He leaves some food and water."

She had an attitude to her situation that intrigued him. He looked at her, left defiled and helpless, yet in many ways, unbeaten. He'd never asked the name of his food before, it just seemed....inappropriate. Nevertheless, he found himself asking.

"What is your name?"

"Laura."

There was a lot of blood on the floor, he doubted if Laura would survive another beating from the one who'd imprisoned her. Simon leant towards her, letting his fangs extend and rub across her neck.

"Make it quick." She said.

Strange, most of his victims reacted when they felt the sharp tip of his fangs on their flesh. Horror, surprise, sometimes even trying to scream, once they'd realised his true nature. There was a sound from above, cursing and footsteps on the stairs. Simon pulled back and whispered in her ear.

"Shush, we'll surprise your tormentor."

He moved back and melted into the shadows. It was no vampire's trick, just the skill gained from centuries of experience. Simon had once been an assassin for the House of Medici, he knew how to stay hidden. The door on the basement was flung back, the man entered and seemed relieved that Laura hadn't escaped.

"Who broke in? Tell me, or I'll hurt you worse than before."

"Someone who can easily snap you in two." She answered.

Brave and maybe a little foolhardy. Simon still hadn't made his mind up whether to kill the man and release her, or kill them both. Killing both was safer in the long run. Her jailer looked quite ordinary,

but most successful criminals usually did. It was the failures whose faces adorned the news and reality TV shows.

He looked like the sort of man who'd run a corner shop. A friendly and likeable character. Then he undid her chains, wrapping them round his fists to begin hitting her with them. He was no longer a nice man, he was now a monster. Simon was a monster too, so he just watched. There was something about her eyes though, watching him in the shadows.

"Enough." Said Simon.

He grabbed the man, easily pinning his arms to his sides, before plunging his fangs into a vein in his neck. The man was strong, his heart carried on beating for several minutes, pumping the hot blood into Simon's eager mouth. She watched, enjoying the death of the man who'd hurt her. Simon let the body fall to the floor, the instant the blood stopped flowing. Once the heart stopped, the blood took on an unpleasant aftertaste.

"What will you do with him." She asked.

"I have my ways to dispose of him."

"Tell me ?" She insisted.

She was so annoying, so confident, so..... Like him. He knelt and put his fangs back on her neck, before pulling away again.

"I'll give you a choice." He said. "You must decide quickly and there is no returning from the consequences. Few survive the change to become a vampire, but you have something about you. Or I can leave you here, to escape as best you can."

He kissed her, a long hard kiss on her bruised and bloody lips.

"Which is it to be ?" He asked.

"Will I really live forever ?"

He laughed and decided he'd been right to make the offer to turn her.

"There are accidents and we fight each other." He said. "There is a slim chance you'll survive the change and few of my kind are really old. There are very few of us anyway ! I've met barely fifty of my kind, in over seven hundred years."

"How old are you ?"

"No more questions ! A decision ?"

"Yes, change me, make me a vampire."

Simon had never turned anyone, he'd just watched one of the rare occasions when it had worked. It was all down to timing and a lot of pure luck. He stretched her out on the floor, ignoring her yells as he touched her wounds.

"What is your name ?"

Damn the girl, he needed to concentrate.

"Simon. Now shut up !"

He bit into her throat, allowing her blood to begin flowing. He drank from her feeling her heart begin to struggle. She was too weak ! He'd seen it work on a great bull of a man. He bit his own wrist, pushing the wound into her mouth.

"Drink !" He commanded. "You need to digest my blood, before your heart stops."

She swallowed, coughing as she tasted his blood.

"Survive and the next time, it will taste like nectar." He said.

Timing was the key and Laura was dying, far too quickly. He drank a little from her, not certain if that was essential to the process. He opened the wound on his wrist further, pouring his blood into her throat. She couldn't die now, he wouldn't let it happen.

“No Laura ! Don’t cough or spit. Swallow or you’ll die !”

She swallowed; he felt the movements in her throat as he leant forward to drink from her again. Her heart stopped beating before he could get his fangs into a vein. Always a vein, only an inexperienced vampire killed by opening up a major artery and killing their food too soon.

Laura was dead, her blood was now just dribbling from the puncture wounds he’d put in her neck. The woman he’d wanted to turn into a vampire, was now just a hundred and twenty pounds of dead meat and might remain that way.

“You died too fast.” He muttered.

He sat cross legged on the floor and waited, he was good at waiting. Maybe the boredom side of the human brain died during being turned ? Whatever the reason, he could sit and wait for hours, without feeling even slightly bored. After two and a half hours, Clara found him. It wasn’t any kind of link between them, no bond of the Nosferatu. The house they shared was less than a mile away and like him, she’d smelt the blood.

“Are you trying to make her one of us ?” She asked.

“Yes, there’s something about her. I think she’ll be..... Useful.”

He hadn’t heard her arrive, like him she’d had centuries to learn the art of remaining unseen and unheard. Just a young woman in jeans, trainers and the inevitable hooded jacket. Perfume though ! She always gave herself away by wearing perfume. Clara knelt next to Laura, putting her cheek against the dead woman’s chest.

“How long has it been ?”

“Two and a half hours.”

He could see her eyes peering at him in the darkened room, those wonderful green eyes that he’d learned to almost love. She knew and he knew, that Laura was almost certainly never going to open her eyes again.

“We should dispose of both bodies.” Said Clara. “You know she should have responded within an hour, if she was ever going to.”

“No ! Leave her. She’s unusual, her personality. She was like us, without being us.....it’s hard to explain.”

Clara kissed him on the cheek and picked up the dead man, as though he weighed nothing.

“I’ll get rid of this one.” She said. “But you know if she hasn’t moved within the next two hours..... Special or not, you’ll have to dispose of the body.”

“I know. Thank you Clara.”

She left, just a slight trace of her perfume remaining with him. Chances were that Laura was never going to become a vampire, but he’d give her another two hours. After all, he wasn’t getting any older. Three hours later, an hour after dawn, Laura opened her eyes.

“I thought you’d never wake up.” He said.

He remembered the confusion in his mind, when he’d woken up, after that fool Giovanni had turned him into a vampire. Simon let her sit up on her own and gave her time for her mind to work properly. Being new born was like waking from years of sleep, her thoughts would be chaotic for quite some time.

“Who are you ?” She asked.

“Be patient, the raging in your head will soon stop. Try to relax.”

He sat next to her, but didn’t touch her. Her eyes had flecks of green now, but otherwise there was no outward sign of the change. She’d have fangs now, which would drop down when she needed to

feed. That had shocked him, the first time he'd fed from a human throat. Laura put her hand up to her neck.

"The vein will be healed." He said. "The wound in your skin will heal soon."

She recognised him and smiled.

"So Simon, it looks like it worked."

"It did. Sit for a while longer and then I'll take you my house. You can meet Clara."

"Is she your wife?"

"No, we don't marry, but we have been together for a long time."

The questions! She'd probably drive them crazy with the questions. Simon would tell her the truth though and be honest about the things he didn't know, which was quite a long list. Giovanni had filled his head with nonsense about them being the Children of Cain and piles of other quasi-Christian mumbo jumbo.

"Will I need to feed soon?" She asked.

"Yes, but there is no uncontrollable hunger. Most of the stuff in films and TV shows is crap. Don't worry Laura, you'll pick it up as you go along."

She looked at the light, coming through a tiny window high up on the wall. He knew what was coming next, another avalanche of questions. He sympathised, remembering his own post change mixture of confusion and misunderstandings. Hollywood had a lot to answer for, when it came to dodgy vampire folklore.

"Are we stuck here until sunset?" She asked.

"No, nor are you harmed by holy water, garlic or crucifixes. Ignore just about everything you've read or seen on TV."

She looked so forlorn. It was time to hold her hand and get her on her feet.

"Is it all nonsense?"

"You're strong, you'll never again have trouble opening a jar of pickle. The rest though? Yes, most of it is crap. Be careful around holy places though, like churches and convents. No one is certain of the rules, so it's best to avoid religious places."

"Can we fly?"

He sighed and saw her face drop. He too had once hoped to fly, or turn into a bat, or maybe even a cloud of fog. Those bastards in Hollywood had a lot to answer for. Simon looked her over and she wasn't ready to walk the streets of Wood Green.

"You've enough blood on your dress to make someone call the police." He said. "You'd better wear my jacket."

She looked a mess, but no worse than many others arriving home in the early hours of Saturday morning. She'd do, no one was going to call the authorities if they saw her.

"Come on, it's only a short walk to our house. You can probably borrow some of Clara's clothes."

She clung to his arm as they climbed the stair and out into the sunlight. He remembered the way sunlight had stung his eyes and sometimes still did.

"You get used to sunlight Laura, but you'll never like it."

"Why do we have to avoid holy places Simon?"

Questions, questions! He'd condemned himself to bringing up a toddler. Part of him liked it though, the opportunity to relive some of his past.

"I saw the consequences myself." He said. "I travelled with three others then, wild people from Prague. We thought all the rules about anything holy were nonsense."

"Tell me?!"

“It was a bad winter, even we were beginning to suffer from the cold. We’d taken shelter in a small village church. There was no problem until Ludmilla was hungry the next morning and decided to feed on the priest. I can tell you, feeding on holy ground is something to avoid.”

The streets were quiet, they’d only walked past one guy walking a dog. Soon he’d have Laura indoors and get her into some clean clothing.

“Stop teasing me.” Said Laura. “What happened to Ludmilla ?”

“Me tease ? I never tease. She fed on the priest and I saw her die as the priest died. It wasn’t pretty ! Her death was nasty and slow. I wouldn’t wish her death on my worst enemy. Trust me ! You don’t want to hear the details.”

They were there, the rather shabby street he lived in. He liked it, no one asked what you were doing if you came home late and didn’t seem to have a job. The key was in his jacket pocket, so he had to stop and get Laura to give it to him.

“I do want to know the details.” She said. “ Tell me Simon, tell me everything ?!”

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To be continued.....

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This is just a teaser for a full novel ‘London’s Night Stalkers,’ which will be posted in chapters, during 2017.

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