

Of Life and Unlife

Von Crion_dm459

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Prolog: Introduction to Darkness	2
Kapitel 1: A Breath of Life	3
Kapitel 2: A Leap of Faith	7
Kapitel 3: A Long Nap	10
Kapitel 4: A Rude Awakening	12
Kapitel 5: Old Friends	14
Kapitel 6: Of War and Peace	15
Epilog: Final Decisions	17

Prolog: Introduction to Darkness

A name? After all of this time, the only thing that you ask me for is a trifle such as this? Surely, you must be more creative than that.

What? You are serious? You traveled all of this way, and waited all of this time, just to ask me my name? I would have assumed that you jest, but this is apparently not the case.

A name...what is a name? Honestly, can you tell me? A name is nothing more than a collection of letters that one uses to identify oneself, a way to differ themselves from the masses that surround them. Some people receive names with a meaning. "Fire," "Sword-Arm," or even "Wolf in a chair," and others are named after important people, such as Napoleon, a famous person in the family line, or even a popular star such as Chuck Norris.

Asking this question to a man like me, who has these beliefs about these words, is surely a way to lead to a boring conversation.

But child, are you sure that this is what you want to know? No questions about my past, my future plans, or even my next book?

A brave woman, to be sure. Your mind is on track, and it is apparent that you will not give this up.

I hope that you know the consequences of my answers tonight. One of my answers may lead to hundreds of questions, and eventually, everything you want to know will be yours. Are you prepared for this next step?

I'm glad. So, where shall I start?

My name?

Sure.

Please, dearest guest, call me Dorian.

Kapitel 1: A Breath of Life

Now that that is situated, would you like some wine? It may be the best way to prepare for the long tale that I am preparing to tell you. No? If you by chance change your mind, please help yourself.

So, where to continue on...

Ah! That's it! All of you interviewers ask the same question. "Where are you from?" Am I correct?

Yes, I thought I would. I have a lot of experience with these things.

Eh? How much experience? Please my dear, one question at a time.

Where I was born was a small village in what is known today as France, somewhere close to the border of what is now Germany.

What? You say that there is no village near Germany? My dear, you should let me finish. Didn't your mother teach you that it was rude to interrupt a man when he is telling you the story that you asked for?

Oh? Ah, yes, you were taught that you shouldn't interrupt your *grandfather* when he was telling stories. But please, if you may, grant me the same respect that you gave him. You will understand everything in due time.

Now, where was I? Yes, the village.

The name was lost in time, surely. Yes, the village no longer exists, and sadly, I do not remember the name of it. It was so long ago...

No matter. I was born in this small village. Life was normal, all things considering. Our lord kept us poor peasants safe, and our Lord and Father gave us a promise that if we served his servants, we would be saved.

I look back and laugh at such tripe.

But, that is how I was raised. My father worked the fields with my two older brothers, and my mother was trying to find a way to have my sister marry as soon as she was of age. I was, sadly, the problem child.

As a child, my health was poor. The priest stated I would be lucky to survive the first few years of life. Even furthermore, he claimed that if I did survive, it would be a miracle by God if I would ever have enough health to work the fields like my father before me.

But I did survive my first years. Afterwards, my family found me more of a burden than I help. I could not work in the fields with my brothers. They could not find a logical way for me to be married; who would want to marry a man who could not work to support his family. I was trapped inside the house at a young age, and my mother feared that my life would continue that way until my health finally snapped, and I would die.

A terrible way to begin your life, wouldn't you agree?

But no, do not start crying. Here, have a glass of wine. 1859, a good year, I assure you. There, that is better. My goal is not to make you cry. My romance novels are designed for that purpose. I myself am not.

But life was not nearly as bad as it seemed. That very same priest, who damned me at the start of my life, wanted me to study under him. His argument was simple; if I could not be perfect in body, I should prepare my spirit in the best way possible. He offered me a place in the church; a place to make my life have purpose. A place that my family preferred that I would live instead.

Of course, at that age, I obeyed. I moved into the grounds of the church and devoted my life to a god that would never listen to me.

But, it was not all bad. I was given a roof to live under when it rained. I was given the food and water that I needed to continue preaching. They taught me how to read and write, and eventually, ordered me to work in the "library."

It was fascinating. At such a young age, I was a sponge. I would study any book (a rare thing at that time) that came to me, and I was rather fickle with how things *should* work. I wanted things to be in order, and I wanted them to look beautiful while I did it. So, they ordered me to work in the libraries. The job itself was not very bad. I learned from the elder man who worked there how he ordered the books, and I gave my own suggestions. While this often angered him, he did see some wisdom in my words and would perform what I requested days later, claiming it was his own idea.

A pity...

The library seemed to be a gift from God. He gave me something that I could work in, and a way to enjoy life. Even though I was only seven years of age, this life was something I didn't think I would leave behind.

But, of course, all good things must come to an end. This, of course, was no exception. The man that I worked under was mad. No, not angry, mad. The man was possessed with a demon, a shadow over his mind that altered his perceptions. The man was possessed with lust, but not one that a woman could fix. No, one that only a young boy could slake.

One night, he tried to take me in the back of the library. Even at his age, he was stronger than I would have believed. Even now, I still cannot believe the grip that he held within his hands.

He always said soothing things in a calm voice, claiming that this was all God's will, that this is what was meant to be, and things of the sort.

Even at that time, I knew it was all bullshit, and didn't believe a word of it.

But, what was I to do? I was only seven years old. I couldn't do much more against the man than a toddler against a wolf. I only clamped my mouth shut and braced for the worst.

The next morning, after I had awoken from a night that I had cried myself to sleep, I found that he was dead in his bed. No one knew how or why, but some souls would be willing to point a finger at me all too quickly.

Over the next few years, I grew more and more disenchanted with the library. The books were all the same, speaking of a God that I believed watched the scene from that night with joy. A God that refused to intervene at a time I truly needed him most. Instead, something else caught my eye. Within some of the books were sketches of beings. Some were the drawings of what people believed to be angels. Others were of Lucifer himself, drawn to strike fear into the hearts of those who witnessed it. Others still were calming images of the virgin mother, and even more damning: the dark portraits of Lillith.

These were the first steps for me. They were lovely, and I could not get them out of my mind. A story can only have so many words, but a picture...there are times that you cannot put an image to words. Dark, dreary, colorful, adorable, damnable...all of these can be used within the same picture, and it would not even scratch the surface. And no matter how hard I tried, they would never leave my mind. Eventually, at the age of thirteen, I succumbed. I used some of the paper that I had been given, and began to draw an image of the virgin mother. I had done my best to keep the task a secret, but eventually someone did discover my growing works. Mary was only the

first. Eventually, I began to depict scenes such as the manger, the destruction of the Tower of Babel, and even the casting down of judgment upon Lucifer.

The first reactions were mixed. Some thought that it was just the wandering mind of a child, and that I should be punished for taking such an action freely. Others claimed that I was possessed, allowing Lucifer to appear as a pitiable creature in my work, and should be executed before I claimed another soul for darkness. Others still saw my work as a gift from God. A gift that they could exploit.

They moved me once again. The head of our church saw my work, and began to nurture this "gift from the heavens" in a way that he claimed that God "saw fit." He saw that the things I heard and the things I saw were only possibilities of what I could create. What made things most interesting for him was my talent for creating an image with just a few words, and placing the emotions desired into it.

Yes, a gift indeed. A damnable gift, but a gift nonetheless.

I served in that church for years, watching everything within the walls drawing what I was ordered to draw. No one came close to me any longer. The head of the church was the only person who was willing to speak to me, and that was only to order me to draw another image for another church, or a portrait of himself or other such gluttonous acts. It was not much of a life, but it was a way to live comfortably and not be tried as a heretic.

But that, once again, was soon to change.

Another nearby lord, believing that our lord was weak, decided to take the city for himself. The walls were old, just as our lord was. It was not long when they razed anything they wished to burn.

Regrettably (or thankfully), the church was one of the things that caught fire that night.

After a night of fear, blood, and tears, there was a new lord residing over us. He was a proud warrior, claiming that he was saving us from our former pagan lord or some such nonsense. After a while, I learned that every errant knight carried this belief.

Fools...

But again, I digress. I was forced to work the same as the other peasants; out in the fields. I was only eighteen years of age, and already my body was showing signs that it would give up. I had no family to turn to for aid or a church to protect me. Instead, I had a damnable monstrosity of a "God" watching over me.

But still, I continued to draw. I used whatever I could as a canvas and drew whatever came to mind. The night when the fires claimed the church was an image that I placed upon my door. My table, or what was left of it, was a collection of charcoal markings, depicting the poor souls that tilled the fields day in and day out. Any flat surface that could hold the charcoal sketch in place was where I drew.

Of course, in time, this life was not going to stay in place.

I eventually began to fall further and further behind in the fields. My health was failing, and my body was showing signs that it would be unable to deal with the stresses of my job. Shortly after my twentieth birthday, I fell ill and was unable to work the fields.

That time...was difficult. The pain would wrack my body, and I would have uncontrollable spasms. I could hardly leave my bed, much less the house. But still, I drew. The walls surrounding my bed were covered in anything I could sketch. Many of these images were of women and angels, two things that I was seeing in my mind and unable to choose which to follow.

The lord began to round up the "unfaithful" at that time. One night, someone barged

into my home with two others in the employ of our lord. Upon seeing me, the leader smiled to me. He claimed that the job was not needed, that I would be dead soon enough. Why go through the effort to bring me to the lord to be executed when the Lord had already claimed my life.

He began to walk out, but the other two stayed behind for a moment.

They were sympathetic souls; a man and a woman. The man looked through the rooms, and saw my work. He found it odd, that a "low" peasant would have such a talent, and claimed that it was a pity that it would soon go to waste.

The woman, upon seeing me in my room, wasting away and still struggling to create my next image, took pity upon me.

I do not remember most of the night. But from what I do remember, I was taken by force to from my home, just as the other groups of "unfaithful" were taken that night. But, my destination was different. I was not taken to the gallows or any location filled with cruelty or black hearts. Instead, the two carefully took me to the lord's chambers, passing by every guard that would have tried to stop them.

The meeting with the lord was brief. I collapsed as I kneeled to him, and the women held me in place.

When ordered to answer for this, the man took him to my home. I stayed at the same location on the floor, struggling to breathe. I do not know how much time had passed, but the lord did return, and hefted me to my feet with strength I could not believe.

He was an attractive man. His bone structure was nearly perfect, with well chiseled facial features and a prominent nose. He had blonde hair and green eyes that I felt would burn me if I stared too long.

At that time...I was nothing like I am now. I was thin and frail, my features comely and smudged with grime. To that man, I was the old gray mare compared to a prize winning horse.

His voice spoke with power, yet a certain degree of honesty and compassion. He made me an offer: he would find a doctor to assist me in my illness, and then allow me to live in the keep. In return, I would serve him faithfully using whatever ability that I had.

I did not have much of a choice. My entire life was slowly slipping away. I took the offer, like a man on his death bed would make a deal with the devil for just a few more years of life.

Some months passed, and he kept true to his word. The "doctor" was there the next night, and the rest is a blur to me. I was forced to drink strange concoctions, and at times, I had my blood removed by cuts in different locations of my body as the man stated that I had too much "humour" in my body.

But, by the time the man left, I was healthy again. And the price?

Well, that was only beginning.

Kapitel 2: A Leap of Faith

Surely you are having a difficult time believing all of this. The simple fact that I am weaving a tale of ancient history as if I had been there is just a sign of my ability of telling tells. But, my dear, did you ever think for a moment that I was telling you the truth? Do you honestly believe that I am telling you the tale of my next book instead of my own life story?

Yes, yes, have a glass of wine. I believe that it may help for what will come next.

I had made a full recovery at that time. I was given a room, clean clothing, and even the option to bathe. It was...paradise. It was like living in the church, but without the same restrictions.

Of course, I did have a job. My first job with the lord was to work in his library. I did not wish to see a library again, but he needed to have things in order. He wanted these musty tomes that his guests would frequently use to have some form of order. He found that I could read just as easily as he could, and believed that assigning me to the job would save the hassle on his guests.

To me, it was a simple job. Just place the books in some semblance of order by title, and the job was done. I did not mind that some of the titles consisted of names like "The Book of Nod," "The Book of Shadows," or the "Necronomicon." I only did what I was ordered, and gave my mind the simple explanation that he had these books to learn of his enemies.

Afterwards, he ordered me as his scribe. I would write his letters to his colleagues, his family, and his enemies as he dictated. I was uncertain if this was because he himself was unable to write, or if he believed that doing such labor on his own was below him. But still, I wrote as I was instructed. Some of these letters were addressed to strange people. One day, I would write a letter to the cardinal in a nearby town, and the next I was writing to an "old acquaintance" about a three-hundred year old book that had arrived to the library the day before. As always, I thought nothing of these letters. I saw them as what I was assigned to do to survive.

But, even during this time, the passion within me was not dead. For years, I did as I was ordered in the library, as his personal scribe, and even teaching other people of his choosing to read and write, but something within me felt empty. I wanted something that I was missing.

At any chance I had, I stole some paper from anywhere that I could, and using whatever materials I had, I began to draw. These drawings were different from before, but they were drawings all the same.

In my childhood days, only religion mattered to my mind. God had given me a gift and I was expected to use it properly.

Now, my art was different. I drew some religious moments, such as the great flood, the damnation of Adam and Eve, and the destruction of Abel by his brother's hands. But, many other times, my mind wandered. I drew the demons that haunted my dreams when I slept, the women that I knew I could never have, and the battlefields with a rain of blood that I have heard from our own knights. These images always remained burned into my mind, and no matter how many times I would draw them or variations of them, they continued to burn like a fever.

But, one day, I was careless. I did not destroy the images, but only hid them. Eventually, there were too many to hide within my room, and they were found.

I was taken before the lord again.

This time when I met him, things were different. He was still handsome to a point of perfection, and the woman that was in his room at that time just as beautiful. The jealousy that I held was kept in check by the men at my sides.

I myself was what truly had changed. Finally given the chance of living in conditions that did not mean my death, I was not as frail as I had once been years before. I was clean, and the only sign of any grime on me was on my hands from the constant use of ink and the dust from the books I organized. I was by no means as ugly as when I had first met the man, but his looks still far surpassed mine.

The result of that meeting was strange, to say the least.

I first thought that I would be killed, or suffer some other form of punishment for stealing from the lord of the house. But no strike came, no call for my death. Just silent contemplation as he and the woman with him examined the drawings.

They exchanged a few words in a language I did not know before turning back to me.

He then decided to change his original offer. He wanted me to start working on his portrait, and then continue my service only in drawing what he commanded me to.

While this may seem a bit restrictive, it was a job that I wanted more than anything. I was actually given permission to draw, and to *paint*. That was the true shock. This would be one of the first times I could place an image in color.

The portrait started slow, as he demanded to be depicted as something powerful and mighty, slaying his foes. After some time of working on his concept, he demanded to appear as a figure of authority, yet an image of something to love. Every so often, he would change his demands, and I would have to start anew.

Eventually, over a year later, it was finished. The image was hanging in his personal gallery, which was steadily growing as he gave a few words and ordered me to paint.

The gallery continued to grow as I began to grow older. But, he never seemed to age. In fact, when I reached the age of twenty-seven and began to fall ill again in my age, he still appeared as young as when he moved in.

I did not ask questions. He brought someone to heal me years ago, and I assumed that he had his ways to stay young that he never shared with any other worker. It was only fair, but I was beginning to fear for my own mortality.

But, as always, things were bound to change. Shortly after my twenty-eighth birthday, a time when I was truly showing my age, one of the women who frequently came to speak to the lord came to my chambers.

She was...beautiful. There is no word for it. She had the grace of a dancer, the air of a queen, hair of platinum, eyes of sapphires, and the beauty of nature. I believe "perfection" would be too poor of a word to do her justice.

She came to me that night, even with my poor health. At this time, many servants avoided me in fear that I would infect them with my ailment. It was a shock to have a guest, especially one as elegant as she.

Her request was a simple one, but would be my most daunting task yet. She only requested that she become an immortal in my work; she only wanted a simple portrait. Her payment, she said, would be enough for me to continue living for ten years, maybe even longer.

At that time...I didn't have anything else to lose. I feared that the lord would dispose of me any day at his whim due to my poor health. I reluctantly agreed. She was pleased. In fact, she was pleased enough to not leave my room that night.

I never expected or experienced things like that. Every woman in the manor saw me as a man to stay away from. Not because of my looks, but because of my personality. I

was considered eccentric at times for the fervor of my work. I was...strange to them. And no woman wished to risk her chaste nature for getting to close to me.

This woman was of course, different. I should have taken that as a warning that this young woman, possibly younger than the lord himself, would choose someone like me over someone like him.

But, again, I digress. You are not here to hear my doubts over my first experience, but to hear my life. My apologies.

For the next few months, through the summer and into the fall, I continued to draw. The woman would come and check my progress and pose as needed, always making her visits more of an inspiration and a way to goad me to complete the work.

I knew that my health was failing upon the oncoming of fall. I knew I needed to finish this work soon, and asked her to come more often. Weekly, at that. She was pleased for the request and began to come as I asked.

Her beauty was no match at all for her voice. She always spoke with a calm tone that demanded to be heard. A strange combination, but if you had heard her words, you would believe the same.

It was in October when I finished. I knew that I would be knocking upon death's door soon enough, and rushed to complete every detail. The work...is beyond words.

Her reaction was also beyond words. She looked at me and knew what my condition was. She smiled at me that night, and placed me into my bed. Things were growing dark when the extreme ecstasy of her kiss flooded all my senses.

The next night, I awoke with a great hunger. She was at my side when I awoke, and also slowly left the bed to search for her dress.

I felt...strange. My body felt lighter and cooler. My breathing was shallow, but I did not suffer any difficulties from the low level of air. Finally...my illness was gone. The night before, I had a belief that I would die. But there I was, still moving.

And the hunger inside of me grew.

She smiled again and calmly told me to dress myself. Then we would search for our breakfast.

She was the first to show me how far I had sold my soul. She taught me that I needed the blood of the humans, the very same humans that I had been working with all of these years, in order to survive. The first time was...lovely.

It is a simple experience to imagine. Just think with me...imagine wanting something so badly, and suddenly having it. Imagine that even if you are taking what you want by force, a level of force that could kill the person you are taking from, you know that you will never be caught. Even better; the person gives it to you willingly. It is almost the way she was, offering herself to me on that first night...

Again, I digress.

She stayed with me in the manor for a few days. After that time, she ordered that we should move. The lord was growing irritated that I was not giving him the attention that a lord deserved.

My fourth night after awakening was when I moved again, saying goodbye to this life. And of course, my life would never be the same again.

Kapitel 3: A Long Nap

Of course, this is a difficult thing to understand, isn't it? Here, allow me to prove it to you.

Do you see? I am not breathing at all, even though I am speaking to you. And here, place your fingers upon my wrist. No, don't worry, I won't bite you. Please.

See? I don't carry a pulse either. And have you noticed that I look quite pale, even by the light of the fire?

Now dear, don't go pale on me. And please, don't scream out. One of my butlers is sick, and he needs to sleep. I do not wish for him to wake up only to call the asylum for you.

A threat? No my dear, that is not a threat. If you were to tell anyone this story, that is what they would do to you. You could write everything I am saying into that little notebook, which is still empty I might add, and give it to your editor. He would look at it and ask you how much you had to drink. You would eventually work as hard as you could, using your good looks to your advantage to sleep with anyone you had to in order to move up the line to expose your story. But, by that time, they would either kill you or place you into an asylum. Once you walk out of that door, even I cannot save you.

But, I can save you. Please, take your hand from the door and have a seat. Would you like more wine? Yes, that's a good girl. Please, relax. I knew that choosing you for this job was the right choice?

Choosing you? Yes, yes, I did choose you myself. I heard of your ability to understand any story that is told to you, and you know the best ways to separate fact from fiction. Yes, I chose you for this job. So please, calm down and listen. It may save you if you were to hear the whole story before leaving with half truths and whole lies.

Now, where was I?

Ah, yes. We were moving on. She and I went to the area of Venice. A very lovely place, actually. She claimed that it was a seat of power in Europe at the time, and I did not believe her until I saw it myself.

I did not know how many of us really existed, or much about our kind except for what she had told me during the journey, but I learned many more things upon our arrival. Not all of us have this gift without consequence. That is something that I learned the hard way. My love of art in life had become an obsession afterwards, and this is considered minor compared to some of the others of our kind.

In Venice, I saw that with my own eyes. Some of us are truly damned creatures. I have met some that changed physically upon their transition, making them impossible to recognize. Others have had their minds shattered, like broken mirrors. Some have had their passions drive them into fits, and some other poor souls can never see how they look, since they do not have reflections.

This was the society that I was brought into. This was the world that I would have to learn about. Politics, power, and immortality.

Yes, immortality.

This woman had only said ten years, but said nothing of the potential for ten *thousand* years. As long as I drank, I could live for an eternity. If my own physical and mental abilities could not make it, then my gifts as a member of the blood would suffice.

And they did. Venice was truly a new home for me. It was a place where I could

practice my ability to survive in this new world of the night, and a place to make friends and enemies alike.

But, once I became comfortable, the world fell apart like a house of cards. It seems to happen often in my life, as you can see.

There was an uprising within our society. A small group began to dispatch of our kind, taking joy in devouring their blood.

She was one of those numbers that were killed...she was devoured entirely, even her soul, by that man.

Of course, I was still young. The only thing that saved me that night was the ability to run faster than the others.

I returned to her "home" in Venice before sunrise, and found a place beneath the home that seemed comfortable enough.

I was told that those of our kind can sleep like a force of nature. We can sleep for almost as long as we can live. My loss weighed heavily upon my un-beating heart, and I decided that sleeping away the pain would be the best choice.

Kapitel 4: A Rude Awakening

So, I learned from experience that sleeping is a great feeling. I didn't sleep too much in life, since I was always drawing. But, this type of sleep was much different. I slept peacefully for hundreds of years.

Over six hundred, actually. Why did I even bother to wake up? I had slept for so long, and I heard the world above me was still moving. I wasn't there to witness it, but the differences were there.

The house I moved up into was much different than it used to be, and the people inside were dressed in strange garb as well. I fed very well for my first night, saving one of the servants to inform me of the changes.

And my, the changes were great.

Swords were falling out of style, and a weapon called a "musket" was taking its place on the fields of war. But, the owner of the house owned a sword, and at my command, the servant told me that even a peasant can learn to use a blade and could make a living from it.

I left the man with his life, but some of my blood inside of him. I needed to see this new world, and I needed someone to keep the house under control for me.

And yes, the world was much different.

People were not afraid of every shadow as they were in my age. Torches were replaced with lanterns. Large broadswords and men in armor were replaced by a few individuals wearing leather boots and gloves with rapier and musket as choice weaponry. The times were so strange to me.

But still, I had awakened. I would have to live with this new world. If things had changed this much in these few hundreds of years, I could only imagine how much more difficult it would be to move into the world of today. So, I stayed at the house, forcing the man to obey my commands and weave a plausible story as to why I would now be the owner of the house.

Life was...interesting at the beginning. I learned of the numerous wars, the end of the crusades, and the dawn of this "Golden Age." Vampire society was different as well, as the clans were creating their own groups and waging their own war against each other, using humans as needed.

It was an interesting thing to awake to. But, of course, something forced me to move again. An old enemy of mine stumbled upon me, and gave chase. I eventually found myself here again in France after a short time of running through other countries, learning what I could on the run.

Thankfully, there was one important thing I did learn: art could bring a way of life. While in my living days, art was something to be used as a tool to promote the religion and to force the peasants to believe that the king ruled by divine right, it proved as a true way to earn money in my nights after death.

I used my talents to quickly find a place to stay, and used my talents from live to ensure my position. Vampire society gave me a wide berth as I painted. I was well known and actually respected as I worked. I was even given a request by l'empruer himself to paint his portrait. Of course, I took the offer.

And it is quite interesting how these offers tend to lead to problems.

This time, this was my own fault.

By taking this offer, I had given someone the right to use my portrait in a more public

place. My artwork was well known in France, and my style was proving to be a threat to the society of vampires. I decided that it was a good time to “die,” and repeat the process in another country.

Using some of my new and powerful friends, I continued to move across Europe. But my art would never change. I still would draw what I would see, but it did not have the malleability that it had in life. No matter where I went, I was running out of room. My new names all had the same problem; the art was the same as a man from France, or Germany. The artwork was a dead giveaway by the middle of the 1800’s, and I was ordered to stop by a local prince who refused to house me.

I was performing the same work for too long. If I were to continue, I would risk the entire society with my selfish acts. I needed a new job that I was capable of.

The idea was simple, but painful. I turned in my brush and my canvas in exchange for paper and pen. I would write the world that I saw. As long as I always saw new things, I would always have something to write.

And I have seen many things my dear. Many, many things. I have seen demons rising from pagan circles, werewolves running a rampage in a village, and murderers meeting their final demise.

Of course, I also had my share of experiences. I was hung one night myself, and it gave me a great show as to what those killers felt at the end of their lives. I used my skills with fencing to dispatch of the rampaging beast in my city, and I have warned the church and their “holy knights” of the pagan meetings.

But, I was missing something in all of this. There were so many secrets that I needed to uncover in my life, and I was going too slowly to do it myself.

And that, my dear, is where my dear friend Kail comes in...

Kapitel 5: Old Friends

Kail was a strange vampire. At least to a point. He was not very old, and his blood was far from potent. But, he was born in this time, and knew all of the secrets. He had a bad habit of gathering them, and had an even worse habit of selling them to the highest bidder.

Of course, there was something about him that made him different that interested me. Upon his change, he was altered into some monstrosity that would appear worse than a gargoyle upon Notre Dame. I will spare you the details, for I do not wish you to grow ill by hearing of his façade.

And this is the fact that interested me. How could a creature of such gruesome appearance that reeked of the sewers learn so many secrets?

It was much simpler that I could believe. He showed me everything at that time, for a small price of course. I gave him the money and the book I had written that he desired, and he showed me his ways.

He was adept at sneaking, and used the sewers to his advantage. He would walk under holy ground and into a monastery, and listen as the monks succumbed to the dark arts. He would walk into a nunnery and hear the unholy acts that one unfaithful nun would perform on a lustful man. He would enter a palace without a second thought, and listen to the discussions of rebellion.

But it did not end there. His resources of the sewers would only allow him to reach so far. His blood was what gave him the last piece that was needed in this job. He had a strange ability to hide and blend into surroundings and crowds. The talent he possessed was almost perfect. This...this is what I had been looking for. This was the final thing I needed to complete my task; a way to not only be invisible to the mortals, but not go unnoticed among the immortals.

Of course, he was not going to teach me willingly. In fact, he was quick to attack me when I demanded to learn his secret.

But, again, he was young. His power was unrefined. He was only in this form for maybe fifty years...I had at least twice the time, and a teacher that was much older. He was easy to dispatch, but there was still something he had that I needed. It was then I made the hardest decision of my life.

I committed one of the greatest sins of our kind. I willingly drank his soul, forcing it into my body, just for the power that he could grant me. Of course, at first, he was not very happy with the result. In fact, he still is not happy now. But he doesn't have a choice. If he had only agreed with me and was nice enough to teach me at that time, we wouldn't have had to deal with this.

So, I consumed his soul and left the remains of his body in the lowest levels of the sewer system of Vienna, and left once again. I knew that if I had been caught, I would suffer a fate much worse.

So, I moved on once again...

Kapitel 6: Of War and Pease

Of course, even people like me had to suffer in the two Great Wars. For the first, I was caught in the middle of it during a stay in Germany. Speaking the language at the time saved me, of course, but my French accent gave me away, and I was distrusted. I lost almost everything thanks to some of my opponents in our society, and was left with almost nothing.

Of course, after the Americans moved in, life wasn't the easiest thing either. Everyone was shooting at anything that walked that wasn't on their side. It was quite a disturbance the first time, and it was at that time when I truly understood how far this "technology" has affected warfare.

What fascinated me most was the level of cruelty that mortals can have for each other. Some would say that with my age, I am not as human as I had once been. But, witnessing these atrocities was enough to cause my still heart to flutter. Yes, I had taken many lives on both sides during the first war, and took many lives of those of our own kind. They had taken so much from me, and were just allowing this war to be an excuse to flush out opposition instead of reaching for a peace treaty.

There were two factions of us at that time...and the war was just a large excuse to kill each other openly. There are normally laws against creating new vampires, or even killing them, but everything was left in the dust as the two groups fought fiercely against and within each other. No vampire was safe; we had problems on all sides. We had the invading armies from other countries and our own armies constantly on patrol, always watching for anything strange. We had the local population, always watching for anyone suspicious no matter who they were and what they could be. We had our own groups, who were only searching for their own power and would not mind setting false evidence to lead to the death of a political opponent. We had the other groups, wanting to take and overthrow our rule that we rightfully had. The war literally became a playground for these groups, and God must have been watching and laughing at anyone who was in between.

Thankfully, the war did end, and I returned to my beloved France before the second war.

I finally thought I would be safe, being in my own home once again. And I also thought that maybe, just maybe, the war could be avoided.

And once again, I was wrong. I really should have gotten used to the concept of moving.

German troops moved into France, and the war started anew. This time, I decided that defending my home was useless. The mortals now had these "flame throwers," and it was quite a disturbing thing to see one in use against another one of our kind. This was only one of the new weapons.

"Shells," bombs, grenades, and new guns. Tanks, planes, and great battleships that would make the ships I saw in life appear useless. And, of course, the birth of the Atomic Bomb.

Of course, even those of our kind cannot stand up to these things. We are powerful beings indeed, and we may have the ability to live forever, but all of the strength of the blood will not allow you to fight with a tank. Nor will it allow you to survive the bomb that the Americans used on the Japanese.

I...I could not do anything. Yes, we are powerful, but not many of us can stand up to

an entire army. Some of those "Special Forces" groups are addicted to blood, using its power to assist them. Some are even groups of our kind, sent out to exterminate us at a moments notice. Most of us had to uphold our masks in this masquerade, dancing this endless waltz and singing the same funeral dirge. Many of us decided not to interfere until we had to.

Yes, not all of us are heartless. We still claimed the lives of those who attacked our cities, but only in small numbers. For each city, there were maybe a few dozen of us. While one of us could match five men, not all of us could fight. Some of us were mad, obsessed with our passions or hiding as our curse consumed us. We could not work together, and we had to sit and watch as everything we had built fell to pieces...

And then it was over. Europe was in ruins. Those of our kind who decided to hold in our ancient castles realized that it was useless. The land was ruined from constant battle, blood, and the pillaging of opposing forces and the poor citizens alike. Those of us who decided to sleep long before either war were in shock to see new things of this level, and decided to sleep again. Some decided after the war that it was the perfect time to sleep again. Humankind had proven more monstrous than any of our kind, and it was a depressing sight to many of us.

Myself? I decided that it was time to rebuild.

I stayed in France for these forty-odd years, rebuilding my fortune, writing all of the history of the war itself and selling a painting as needed. It was quite easy to invest my money as needed into loans to the others of our kind, to the mortals, and even to the government. I could not rebuild France with my own two hands, so I helped in the only way I could.

It is because of this that you have a place to stay. If those of my kind deemed it unworthy, we would have left the mortals to rebuild on their own and allow the Americans to take over. But, of course, we did not want our younger children to be saving us from every problem, and we were quick to shoo them back to their own homes.

Epilog: Final Decisions

Of course, you could just ignore all of what I am saying. But if you wanted to do that, you wouldn't remain in your seat, would you? No, you are interested.

Yes, it is true. I have seen the early churches of the medieval world. I have seen the Renaissance with my own two eyes, and wielded a rapier with the best of them. I have witnessed both World Wars on the front lines and played my part in history.

I have seen the world work from charcoal to write to the lot of us using these things called "computers." I have seen the industrial revolution, where trains outraced horses and took the place to carry mail, and then saw the telephone replace the need for the constant writing of letters.

And now, what will the future bring? Will we see even greater changes? Will the radio become obsolete? What about the telephone? While I was awake, many things have changed from normal lives to warfare. Imagine what it will be like in another twenty years. Or forty. Or even four hundred. It is fascinating, thinking of these possibilities.

And it is even more fascinating that we are capable of this feat.

And now, my dear, is where you come in.

I have done a great deal of research on you. You are more than just good looks, and we both know this. You have a knack, if only you had the time to perfect it. You have curiosity, just as I did when I was your age. You have that mentality that you need to even attempt to become one of us.

What I offer you is eternity. You can work on whatever art you choose, whether you wish to continue with these dead-end writing careers or another art. You have the skill, and with me, you will have literally forever to perfect yourself.

Why do I offer this? A simple trifle. I believe that your gift should be preserved. You are free to decide what gift it is that I am preserving, but I wish to preserve that gift nonetheless, just as someone wished to preserve mine.

But I will tell you, this will not be easy. You may be forced to kill, whether for your own pleasure or for your own survival. You will never see the sun again, and you will almost always have to live in fear of both our kind and the mortals around you.

You will have to move, and leave everything behind. You will have to give up your current life, and then give up your new life again and again. You can never have a place to truly call home. "Home" is only where you live next.

So, my dear, have you decided? Yes, I am giving you a choice, odd as it seems. I was not given one in my time, but I believe that if I was given the offer, I surely would have taken it. You can try to walk out of this door if you wish, but I cannot guarantee your safety. You may be lovely, but some of our kind would rather kill you than risk allowing you to share our secrets.

But, you technically will not leave here alive either. What is your choice?

Oh? So you are willing to walk with me into the darkness?

Then take my hand and follow my lead. There is much to teach you about your new life before you begin. We shall truly dance an endless waltz, and watch the changes in this world as they come.