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THE NIGHT BELONGS
TO THOSE WHO
DO NOT SLEEP.

THOSE WHO SLEEP
LITTLE CAN ACT
WITH IMPUNITY.

THOSE WHO DO
NOT SLEEP AT ALL ARE
LORD AND MASTER
OF ALL THEY SURVEY.



WHATEVER THAT
MIGHT BE.



I'VE ALWAYS
PREFERRED
WOOD BURNING
FIREPLACES.



I GUESS I CAN DISGUISE
ONE SMELL WITH ANOTHER.



BUT
TECHNOLOGY
IS SOMETIMES
CONVENIENT.



HissSSSS

THE SMELL OF GAS IS NEARLY
OVERWHELMING TO ME, EVEN
OUT HERE. MY SENSES CAN BE
BOTH A BLESSING AND A CURSE.



CERTAINLY NOT
THE WORST ONE.



JUST
ONE OF *MANY*
BAD HABITS I'VE
ACQUIRED OVER
THE YEARS.



NOT
BY FAR.



S T. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL,
BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH
WING.



HMMM...
NO SIGNS OF
METASTASIZING IN
THE BIOPSY, LOOKS
LIKE A **CLEAN**
READING.

RING

YES
MASON?
WHAT IS
IT?

HEY DOC,
I'VE GOT SOMETHING
YOU SHOULD SEE IN THE
BASEMENT, MIGHT HELP
YOUR RESEAR...



OKAY. DON'T SAY
ANYTHING ELSE. I'LL
BE DOWN IN A FEW
MOMENTS.

CLICK

SOME THINGS ARE BETTER
LEFT UNSAID OVER THE
PHONE -- IF THEY HAVE
TO BE SAID AT ALL.



THIS IS THE DEMON
THAT I FIGHT. NOT
DISEASE, NOT ILLNESS,
NOT INJURY,

BUT **DEATH**
ITSELF.



IT'S NOT THAT THE
COUNTY MORGUE
BOTHERS ME --
I'VE SEEN LOTS
OF DEAD BODIES.

IT'S JUST THAT THE
"MEAT LOCKER" IS A
LONG WAY FROM THE
MOVIES.

AND I ADMIT, THE
DEAD BABIES DO
BOTHER ME A LITTLE.




HEY
DOC. I'VE
GOT SOMETHING
YOU MIGHT BE
INTERESTED IN. A
JANE DOE CAME IN
THIS WEEKEND,
PROBABLY ONE THAT
NO ONE WILL
BE LOOKING
FOR.

WHAT
HAPPENED
TO HER?

HERE
TAKE A
LOOK.

OH, I
SEE.



FOR **WHATEVER** REASON, I'M
HAVING A HARD TIME PINNING
DOWN HER AGE. SHE'S A **GOOD-
LOOKING** LADY, BUT IT LOOKS
LIKE SHE WAS INVOLVED
IN ONE **HELL** OF A
FIGHT.

DUE TO **MULTIPLE
COMPOUND
FRACTURES**, SHE'S
ACTUALLY ABOUT
SIX INCHES SHORTER
THAN SHE OUGHT
TO BE.

APPARENTLY
SHE **JUMPED** FROM
SOME UNBELIEVABLE
HEIGHT, AND JUDGING
BY THE INJURIES TO
HER LEGS--



THE POLICE THOUGHT SHE WAS INVOLVED
IN THAT **BOMBING** DOWNTOWN, BUT
THEY FOUND HER **SEVERAL
BLOCKS** AWAY.

AND IT
AIN'T LIKE SHE
WALKED.



ANYWAY,
LIKE I SAID,
SHE'S A **JANE DOE**,
SO I THOUGHT YOU
MIGHT BE ABLE TO
USE HER.

THANKS,
MASON. I'LL
COME BACK
FOR HER
LATER.

A FEW DAYS LATER...

GOD, WHAT'S THAT SMELL? I HOPE THE REFRIGERATION IN THE ICEBOX HASN'T GONE DOWN.

WELL, HERE'S THE MALFUNCTION. THIS UNIT'S HOT AS AN OVEN. ODD, THOUGH, IT'S ALMOST LIKE THE HEAT'S COMING FROM THE INSIDE.

STRANGE, IT LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE CLEANED HER UP. HER FACE LOOKS BETTER THAN IT DID A FEW DAYS AGO.

NEXT-OF-KIN VIEWING WILL NOT BE PLEASANT...

JESUS CHRIST!

MASON, WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?

I SWEAR TO GOD, DOC, THAT LADY IS ALIVE. SHE OPENED HER EYES!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THE JANE DOE FROM THE MORGUE IS STILL ALIVE!

YOU'RE FINE, MASON. NOTHING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP WON'T CURE.

MASON, THIS IS CRAZY. WE BOTH LOOKED AT HER INJURIES. THERE'S NO WAY ANYONE COULD SURVIVE THAT KIND OF BEATING. IT'S JUST WISHFUL THINKING ON YOUR PART.

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE KNOW HOW BODIES SETTLE. ISN'T IT POSSIBLE YOU JOSTLED HER AND HER EYELIDS ROLLED BACK?

I, I GUESS SO.

I TELL YOU WHAT, IF I START HAVING NECROPHILIAC FANTASIES, I'M FINDING ANOTHER JOB.

YAWN

OH MY GOD!

MASON, LET'S GET HER TO E.R. NOW!

WE'VE GOT A PATIENT THAT'S **FLATLINE**. I NEED A FULL **TRAUMA TEAM**. WHO'S THE E.R. DOCTOR ON DUTY?

I THINK IT'S DR. GOLDSTEIN.

OH GREAT. WELL IF YOU CAN DRAG HIM AWAY FROM THE **COFFEE MACHINE** AND/OR **NURSE FIELDS**, WE COULD USE HIS **ASSISTANCE** DOWN HERE!

UH, DOCTOR, ARE YOU **SURE** --

STOP **GAPING**, GIRL, I NEED 5 MILLIGRAMS OF **EPINEPHRINE**, 1 MILLIGRAM OF **ATROPINE**, AND 100 MILLIGRAMS OF **LIDOCAINE**. SET UP AN **IV** PUSH NOW.

I'LL GET THE **EKG** GOING. I'M NOT GETTING ANY **PULSE**. **RESPIRATIONS** ARE **STILL ZERO**.

SHE'S STILL **FLATLINE**. LET'S START **CPR**.

JESUS, HER SKIN IS HARD. I JUST **BROKE** THE **NEEDLE**.

STILL NOTHING. DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY **SUGGESTIONS**?

YEAH. HOW ABOUT **BURYING** THAT THING.

DAVID, WE BROUGHT HER UP FROM THE **MORGUE**. SHE'S **COMATOSE** AND --

YOU BROUGHT HER UP FROM THE **MORGUE**? HAVE YOU LOST YOUR **MIND**, SUSAN? HER **VITALS** ARE **ZERO**.

SHE'S A **CORPSE**. HAS YOUR **RESEARCH** MOVED INTO THE **REALM** OF DR. **FRANKENSTEIN**?

SHE IS **DEAD**, DR. RYERSON. MAYBE YOU WERE JUST **IMAGINING** THINGS. ARE YOU **FEELING** WELL?

MAYBE I'M NOT FEELING WELL. MASON, I THINK THEY'RE RIGHT. MAYBE IT'S JUST THE **BODY** SETTLING LIKE WE SAID. WHY DON'T YOU TAKE HER **BACK** DOWNSTAIRS.

YEAH. **SURE**. DOWNSTAIRS.

WELCOME BACK TO THE **REAL WORLD**, DR. RYERSON. A FEW **LUCRATIVE** **DRUG** **PATENTS** WON'T HELP YOU BRING **BACK** THE **DEAD**.

WHAT IN GOD'S NAME HAS GOTTEN INTO ME? TELL ME I DIDN'T JUST DRAG A BODY OUT OF THE MORGUE AND TRY TO BRING IT BACK TO LIFE. I AM DEFINITELY WORKING TOO HARD.

HEY DOC!

MASON, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND? YOU CAN'T BRING THAT THING UP HERE!

DOC, THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON HERE. THERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S NOT *QUITE* RIGHT. I THINK YOU SHOULD *HOO*K HER UP TO YOUR *HIGH-TECH* EQUIPMENT.

IT WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

YEAH, BUT IT WON'T HURT, EITHER.

SEE, NOTHING.

GIVE IT A MINUTE. WE GOT ONE HEARTBEAT DOWNSTAIRS.

THAT WAS A MACHINE MALFUNCTION. MAY I REMIND YOU THAT ONE BEAT PER HOUR IS HARDLY LIFE-SUPPORTING...

BEEP

OKAY, I STAND CORRECTED. *TWO* BEATS PER HOUR. THIS IS JUST TOO *WEIRD*.

THE BODY IS DRAWING BLOOD FROM THAT IV, AND IT *SHOULDN'T* BE GOING IN AT ALL... OR IF SO, IT *SHOULD* BE POOLING BENEATH THE SKIN.

HOOK HER UP TO THE EEG, LET'S SEE IF WE CAN PICK UP *BRAIN* ACTIVITY.

THOSE LOOK LIKE ALPHA WAVES, BUT FAR MORE *EXAGGERATED*, ALMOST LIKE A *SLEEP* DISORDER.

ARE YOU TELLING ME SHE'S JUST *ASLEEP*?

NO, I'M TELLING YOU SHE'S *DREAMING*.

A SMALL VILLAGE IN ENGLAND, THE FIRST PART OF THE 14TH CENTURY.

THE BOY HAD A NAME, BUT IT WAS NOT IMPORTANT. HE WAS KNOWN ONLY AS "HANS' SON." HIS MOTHER, ONLY AS "HANS' WIFE."

THE BOY WATCHED HIS FATHER, THE BLACKSMITH, AT WORK.

TALL FOR HIS AGE, POSSESSING AN UNNATURAL BEAUTY, THE BOY WAS IN TURN WATCHED BY OTHER, LESS INNOCENT EYES.

IN THIS AGE, EVEN THE GAZE OF MEN-OF-THE-CLOTH IS FILLED WITH LECHERY.



WHAT BOTHERS YOU, BOY?

I DON'T LIKE THE WAY THE PRIEST LOOKS AT ME.

HE IS A MAN OF GOD. IT IS NOT UP TO YOU TO JUDGE THE PRIESTHOOD, NOR TO QUESTION GOD'S WAY. NOW COME ALONG BEFORE HE HEARS YOU.

THE PRIEST WATCHED THE HANDSOME YOUNG LAD WALK AWAY, FEELING A STIR IN HIS GROIN.

A USELESS STIRRING IT WAS, HE KNEW, FOR HE COULD HAVE ANYTHING IN THIS VILLAGE EXCEPT THE BOY.



THE PRIEST IS ALLOWED TO TAKE PRIVILEGES, AND WE OBEY GOD'S WORD AS HANDED DOWN TO HIS CHOSEN ONES. WHATEVER TRIBUTE THEY REQUIRE, IT IS OUR DUTY TO PROVIDE.

THIS HAS KEPT US FROM THE "BLACK DEATH." YOU KNOW THAT WILL'S WIFE TOOK ILL WHEN SHE REFUSED THE PRIEST, AND BARELY RECOVERED AFTER SERVING PENANCE.

BUT YOU, MY YOUNG SON, ARE SO STRONG YOU MUST BE BLESSED. YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN SICK A DAY IN YOUR LIFE.

THE BOY'S MOTHER LOOKED DOWN AT THE LARGE STONE HE HAD SO EFFORTLESSLY HANDED HER. "STRONG" WAS PERHAPS AN UNDERSTATEMENT. HIS STRENGTH WAS AS UNNATURAL AS HIS BEAUTY.

IT WAS TIMES LIKE THESE THAT SHE WONDERED. WONDERED AT HER YOUNG SON'S ABILITIES, WONDERED AT THE STRANGE PRACTICES SHE AND HER HUSBAND WERE REQUIRED TO KEEP, AND WONDERED AT THE MYSTERIOUS BENEFACITOR WHO SET THESE RULES IN PLACE.

YOU RUN ALONG NOW.

BUT WHAT DID HER HUSBAND ALWAYS SAY? "AS LONG AS THE GOLD KEEPS COMING, WE ASK NOTHING."



THE BOY WOULD LOOK FOR BERTHA'S DAUGHTER. SHE WAS ALMOST A WOMAN NOW, AND PROBABLY WOULD NOT PLAY WITH HIM, BUT HE WOULD TRY ANYWAY.

AHHH!

IT SOUNDED LIKE BERTHA'S DAUGHTER.

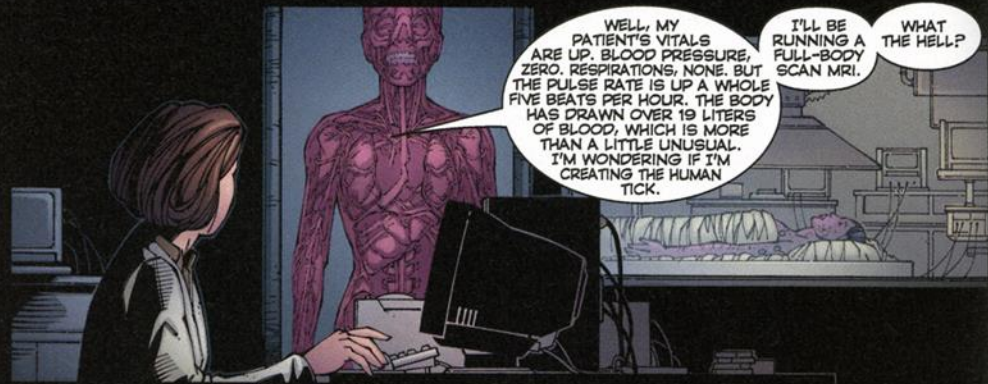
IT WAS BERTHA'S DAUGHTER, AND THE PRIEST. AND THEY WERE STRUGGLING, BECAUSE THE GIRL WOULD NOT ALLOW HIM TO DO WHAT HE WANTED TO DO.

IT SEEMED HE DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH HANDS TO HOLD THE SQUIRMING GIRL AND HIS OWN ROUGH GARMENT.

SMACK

THE BOY SOUGHT SOLACE IN THE RHYTHMIC CLINK OF HIS FATHER'S HAMMER, HOPING IT WOULD DROWN OUT THE GRUNTING AND THE SCREAMS.

BUT SHE WAS ONLY A CHILD, AND COULD NOT HOLD OFF THE FAT PRIEST FOR SO LONG.



WELL, MY PATIENT'S VITALS ARE UP. BLOOD PRESSURE, ZERO. RESPIRATIONS, NONE. BUT THE PULSE RATE IS UP A WHOLE FIVE BEATS PER HOUR. THE BODY HAS DRAWN OVER 19 LITERS OF BLOOD, WHICH IS MORE THAN A LITTLE UNUSUAL. I'M WONDERING IF I'M CREATING THE HUMAN TICK.

I'LL BE RUNNING A FULL-BODY SCAN MRI.

WHAT THE HELL?

WHERE THE HECK IS THE STOMACH?

THE HEART APPEARS TO BE SUFFERING FROM SOME TYPE OF PULMONARY EDEMA, ALTHOUGH THAT'S AN UNDERSTATEMENT. I'VE SEEN CASES OF PERICARDITIS, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS.

ACTUALLY, IT DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE FLUID, EITHER. THAT'S ALL HEART MUSCLE, AND THE ORGAN SEEMS TO BE THREE TIMES ITS NORMAL SIZE.

THE LIVER IS TOO LARGE. THE LUNGS ARE TOO SMALL, AND THE CIRCULATORY SYSTEM IS TOO DEVELOPED. I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY VEINS AND ARTERIES.

AND WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

WELL, I HAVEN'T ACTIVELY PRACTICED MEDICINE IN A FEW YEARS, BUT I REMEMBER ENOUGH TO KNOW THE ESOPHAGUS IS NOT CONNECTED TO THE AORTIC VALVE.

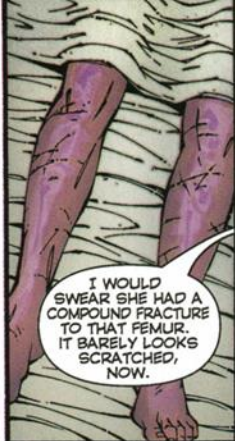
THE MOST LOGICAL EXPLANATION IS THAT SOMEONE HAS TAMPERED WITH THIS BODY.

I'M BEING SET UP!



I'VE GOT TO GET THIS BODY OUT OF HERE! IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY SPRING THEIR TRAP AND COME LOOKING FOR IT! HOW COULD I BE SO STUP ---

WAIT A MINUTE.



I WOULD SWEAR SHE HAD A COMPOUND FRACTURE TO THAT FEMUR. IT BARELY LOOKS SCRATCHED, NOW.



OKAY, I'M STILL AFRAID, BUT NOW FOR COMPLETELY DIFFERENT REASONS.



Hmmm... WE'VE GOT SOMETHING NEW HERE. NOT ONLY DOES THIS WOMAN HAVE AN EXTRAORDINARY ANATOMY, BUT SHE SEEMS TO BE HEALING AT AN ACCELERATED RATE.

WELL, THAT WAS UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE YEAR, DOCTOR RYERSON.



JESUS! THAT THING KEEPS MAKING ME JUMP. I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MUCH BRAINWAVE ACTIVITY.



AND I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE WHO SPENDS SO MUCH TIME IN A DREAM STATE.

THIS COULD BE SOME SORT OF CHROMOSOMAL DEFECT, PERHAPS SOME TYPE OF GENETIC ENGINEERING. BUT IT'S WAY BEYOND ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN.

T

HE BOY STILL REMEMBERED THE FIRST TIME HE SAW THE MAN.



THE OTHER BOYS RAN, BUT HE STOOD FAST IN THE CENTER OF THE ROAD, ENTHRALLED BY THE BAND OF HORSES.

AND BY THE MAN WHO LED THEM.



HE GAZED DOWN AT THE BOY WITH PIERCING DARK EYES.



THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THEIR DEPTHS, SOMETHING SIMILAR TO THE GAZE OF THE PRIEST, AND YET SOMEHOW, NOTHING AT ALL LIKE THAT.

THE MAN STUDIED THE BOY INTENTLY, THEN, WITHOUT A WORD, WHIRLED HIS HORSE AROUND AND DISAPPEARED.



THE BOY STOOD IN THE ROAD FOR A LONG TIME, FEELING A STRANGE AND INEXPLICABLE LOSS.





THERE WAS MUCH TALK IN THE VILLAGE ABOUT A BAND OF MEN CAMPED A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THEIR SMALL TOWN, SPECULATION ON WHETHER THIS WAS A GOOD OR BAD OMEN. SOME SAID HIS LORDSHIP, WHOMEVER HE MIGHT BE, HAD COME TO COLLECT TRIBUTE.

OTHERS SAID IT WAS THE KING HIMSELF. ALTHOUGH NO ONE HAD ACTUALLY EVER SEEN THE KING, OR EVEN HIS LIKENESS.

IT REALLY DIDN'T MATTER TO THE BOY, WHO COULD NOT GET THE STRANGER OUT OF HIS THOUGHTS. LACKING THE PERPETUAL FEAR OF THE OTHER VILLAGERS, THE BOY'S CURIOSITY DREW HIM TO THE ENCAMPMENT UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS.

ALMOST ON CLUE, THE MAN STEPPED FROM HIS TENT, AS IF HE KNEW THE BOY WAS THERE.

AND YET THE MAN PEERED INTO THE DARKNESS, DIRECTLY INTO THE BOY'S EYES, MAKING HIS HEART STOP.



IS SOMETHING WRONG, MY LORD? IS THERE SOMETHING YOU NEED?

NOTHING YOU CAN PROVIDE ME.

BUT THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE, BECAUSE THE BOY WAS A GREAT DISTANCE AWAY IN THE DARKNESS, HIDDEN AMONGST THE TREES.



THE YOUNG MAN WAS ANGERED, BUT THE DARK LORD DID NOT CARE. HIS ATTENTION WAS STILL FOCUSED ON THE NIGHT, GAZING INTO THE BLACKNESS AT SOMETHING THE YOUNG MAN COULD NOT SEE.

THE BOY REALIZED THERE WAS NO WAY THE MAN COULD SEE HIM THROUGH THE DARK.



STILL, HIS HEART WAS BEATING SO LOUDLY IT SEEMED AS IF THE MAN COULD HEAR IT.



THE BOY BEGAN TO TROT, THEN BEGAN TO RUN. IT SEEMED THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE NIGHT BEHIND HIM, SOMETHING MADDENINGLY CLOSE.

IT WAS TOO LARGE FOR A WOLF, AND TOO FAST FOR A BEAR.

HE COULD NOT SEE IT, BUT IT WAS THERE, AND IT WAS GETTING CLOSER.

AHHH!



HE COULD NOT TURN TO SEE WHAT HELD HIM FROM BEHIND, SO TIGHTLY WAS HE IN THE CREATURE'S GRASP.

AND THEN IT WAS TOO LATE. FOR ALL HE SAW WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY REDNESS BEHIND HIS EYELIDS, THEN ALL WENT BLACK.



...APPEAR TO BE LEUKOCYTES, BUT ARE ENTIRELY TOO LARGE AND TOO MANY. IF THEY ARE WHITE BLOOD CELLS, THEN HER T-CELL COUNT IS IN THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS. THE RED BLOOD CELLS DON'T APPEAR NORMAL EITHER.

THIS BLOOD IS DAMN NEAR PATHOLOGICAL.

I INTRODUCED A FAIRLY VIRULENT STRAIN OF STREPTOCOCCUS, IN VITRO, INTO THE BLOOD SAMPLE, AND IT WAS DESTROYED ALMOST INSTANTLY. I TRIED THE SAME THING WITH CANCER CELLS -- SAME RESULT.

THE MUSCULATURE OF THE PATIENT SEEMS FAIRLY NORMAL, AT LEAST FOR AN EXTREMELY WELL DEVELOPED ATHLETE. THE HEART IS ENLARGED TO NEARLY THREE TIMES ITS NORMAL SIZE. THE NETWORK OF VEINS AND ARTERIES IS EXTENSIVE.

THE EPIDERMAL LAYER IS NOW INTACT. THE BRAIN CONTINUES TO REGISTER EXTRAORDINARY ACTIVITY, AND THE GANGLIA AND ASSOCIATED NERVES ARE, WELL, TOO LONG, TOO MANY, AND TOO DAMNED DEVELOPED.

RING

DOCTOR RYERSON.

YEAH, HI DOC, THIS IS PATTY, DOWN IN THE LAB.

YES, PATTY. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

WELL, IS THERE ANY CHANCE YOU CONFUSED THAT BLOOD SAMPLE WITH A LAB ANIMAL?

WHY WOULD YOU ASK THAT?

IT CHECKED POSITIVE FOR L-GULONOLACTONE, AN ENZYME THAT ALMOST ALL ANIMALS HAVE EXCEPT HUMANS.

TOO BAD FOR US, BECAUSE IT CONVERTS GLUCOSE TO VITAMIN C IN THE LIVER.

SO ANY ANIMAL WITH THIS ENZYME CAN CREATE A READY-MADE SUPPLY OF VITAMIN C?

RIGHT, SO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE CONFUSED THIS SAMPLE WITH A LAB RAT, HA HA, BECAUSE OTHERWISE, THIS PERSON HAS BUILT UP RESISTANCE TO SOME INTERESTING DISEASES, JUDGING BY THE ANTIBODIES IN THE BLOOD.

WHAT KIND OF ANTIBODIES?

WELL, BUBONIC PLAGUE FOR STARTERS.

THE BLACKSMITH SHOWED THE TECHNIQUE TO HIS SON, KNOWING THAT IT WAS UNNECESSARY BECAUSE THE BOY'S SKILL WAS ALREADY AS GREAT AS HIS OWN.

HIS SON HAD GROWN TALLER, AND ALTHOUGH SLENDER, WAS AS STRONG AS ANY MAN IN THE VILLAGE.

WHERE MANY HAD SICKENED AND DIED, THE BOY HAD NEVER BEEN SICK A DAY IN HIS LIFE.

EXCEPT THAT ONE TIME, AND THE TIME JUST LIKE IT WHEN THE BOY WAS AN INFANT. BOTH TIMES HE HAD BEEN PALE AND WEAK, NEAR DEATH FOR DAYS WITH NO CAUSE IN SIGHT.

BUT HE HAD RECOVERED, AND THEN SEEMED STRONGER THAN EVER.



OTHER EYES WATCHED THE HANDSOME YOUNG MAN AS WELL, INSOLENT EYES.

EYES FILLED WITH GREED, ENVY, AND LUST.



HAIL PRIEST! WOULD YOU CARE TO SHARE A FLASK OF WINE WITH YOUR MATES?

HA HA HA...

YOU ARE NOT MY MATES, BUT I WILL GLADLY PARTAKE OF YOUR WINE.



OH, NOW THERE'S A PRETTY LITTLE GIRL. HEY LITTLE GIRLIE!

HOW ABOUT THAT ONE, PRIEST? CAN WE HAVE THAT ONE? SHE'S OLD ENOUGH.

YOU THERE, GIRL! COME HERE!

THE GIRL KNEW SHE WAS REQUIRED TO OBEY.

SHE ALSO KNEW THAT BERTHA'S DAUGHTER HAD DIED IN CHILDBIRTH AT THE AGE OF TWELVE.



HA HA! RUN LITTLE GIRL! THE FIRST ONE TO HER GETS TO BREAK HER!







IT WAS SURELY
A MEASURE OF THE MEN'S
DRUNKENNESS
THAT THE FAT
PRIEST NEARLY
CAUGHT
HER FIRST.



BUT IT WAS THE
TOOTHLESS ONE
WHO TRIPPER
HER UP.




HIS FOUL BREATH FILLED THE GIRL'S
NOSTRILS AS HE STRUGGLED WITH
THE ROPE AT HER WAIST.



IT WAS AN
ACT HE
WOULD NOT
COMPLETE.



GET YOUR
HANDS OFF
HER, OR I WILL
KILL YOU ALL
WHERE YOU
STAND.




AND YOU, PRIEST, IF YOU
ARE A MAN OF GOD, THEN I
SPIT ON YOUR GOD AND
WILL GLADLY SPEND
ETERNITY IN HELL.


YOU, YOU
BLASPHEMER!
YOU WILL BE
DAMNED FOR
THIS!

SO BE
IT.


THE PRIEST AND HIS COHORT WASTED NO TIME IN
FLEEING THE BOY, FEARING NOT HIS WORDS, BUT
THE PRETERNATURAL SPEED AND STRENGTH OF
HIS ATTACK. TRULY, THEY HAD NOT EVEN SEEN THE
SPADE FLASH THROUGH THE AIR, SO SWIFTLY
HAD THE BOY MOVED.



THE BOY ON THE
OTHER HAND, WAS
SUDDENLY
DRAINED BY THE
RUSH OF THE
KILLING.



EVEN THE COLD
NIGHT AIR AND DAMP
GRASS COULD NOT
COOL THE FEVER
RAGING INSIDE HIM.



THE SIGHT OF THE
BLOOD MADE HIM
FEEL STRANGE.

Hmmmm... NO DETECTABLE LEVELS OF TESTOSTERONE OR ESTROGEN. GROWTH HORMONE LEVELS ARE OFF THE CHARTS, THOUGH. GLUTATHIONE AND CREATINE ARE PRESENT IN STAGGERING AMOUNTS.

I'M STARTING TO SEE A PATTERN HERE. VITAMIN C AIDS IN THE PRODUCTION OF COLLAGEN, THE BIOLOGICAL GLUE THAT HOLDS EVERYTHING TOGETHER. VITAMIN C AND GLUTATHIONE ARE BOTH POWERFUL ANTIOXIDANTS WITH DISEASE-FIGHTING PROPERTIES. GROWTH HORMONE AND CREATINE ARE MORE INVOLVED IN STRENGTH, BUT THEORETICALLY, THEY AID IN HEALING AS WELL.

IN SHORT, THIS WOMAN IS A PHARMACOLOGICAL WONDER AND HAS A BLOOD PROFILE THE MOST EXPENSIVE STEROIDS IN THE WORLD CAN'T BUY.

WHAT'S THAT?

AM I IMAGINING THINGS? OR DID SHE JUST TAKE A BREATH?

BEEP

JESUS CHRIST!

COME ON, SUSAN. IT'S JUST THE MACHINE. STOP JUMPING AROUND LIKE A SCARED RABBIT. ISN'T THIS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR?

UERY SLOWLY, THE WOMAN'S CHEST BEGINS A STEADY RISE AND FALL.

AND LIKE SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, HER EYELIDS BEGIN THE RHYTHMIC PULSING THAT INDICATES SHE IS DREAMING.

SPRING, TIME FOR PLANTING, TIME FOR FORGING THE TOOLS FOR THE FOLLOWING HARVEST.



THE BOY WATCHED WITH GROWING CONCERN AS A CLOUD OF DUST BEGAN BEARING DOWN ON THE WOMEN.



A CONCERN THAT QUICKLY TURNED TO FEAR.



HEY PEASANT, I HAVE BETTER USES FOR YOU THEN WORK IN THE FIELDS.



IT WOULD REQUIRE SOME LABOR, BUT MOST OF IT WOULD TAKE PLACE ON YOUR BACK!

YOU COULD LIE DOWN ON THE JOB AND GET PAID FOR IT!

NO MATTER NOW.

SOMEONE GIVE ME ANOTHER SWORD! THE WHELP'S GOING FOR MY WEAPON!



TEACH HIM A LESSON, DEREK!

LOOK AT THE WAY HE HOLDS THAT SWORD! HE CAN'T KNOW HOW TO USE IT!



OH, MAYBE HE DOES KNOW HOW! HAHA AHAAA!



YOU LITTLE BASTARD! HOW DARE YOU DRAW BLOOD ON ME!



THE BOY HAD NO IDEA WHO THE RIDER WAS, ALTHOUGH THE YOUNG MAN DID LOOK FAMILIAR, SOMEONE FROM A LONG TIME AGO...





I'LL
TEACH YOU TO
RAISE A HAND
AGAINST YOUR
BETTER.



WELL,
WHEN HE
GETS HERE,
MAKE SURE
YOU LET ME
KNOW.



GOD'S BLOOD! YOU
CUT ME AGAIN! I WILL
NOT SUFFER THIS
IMPUDENCE!

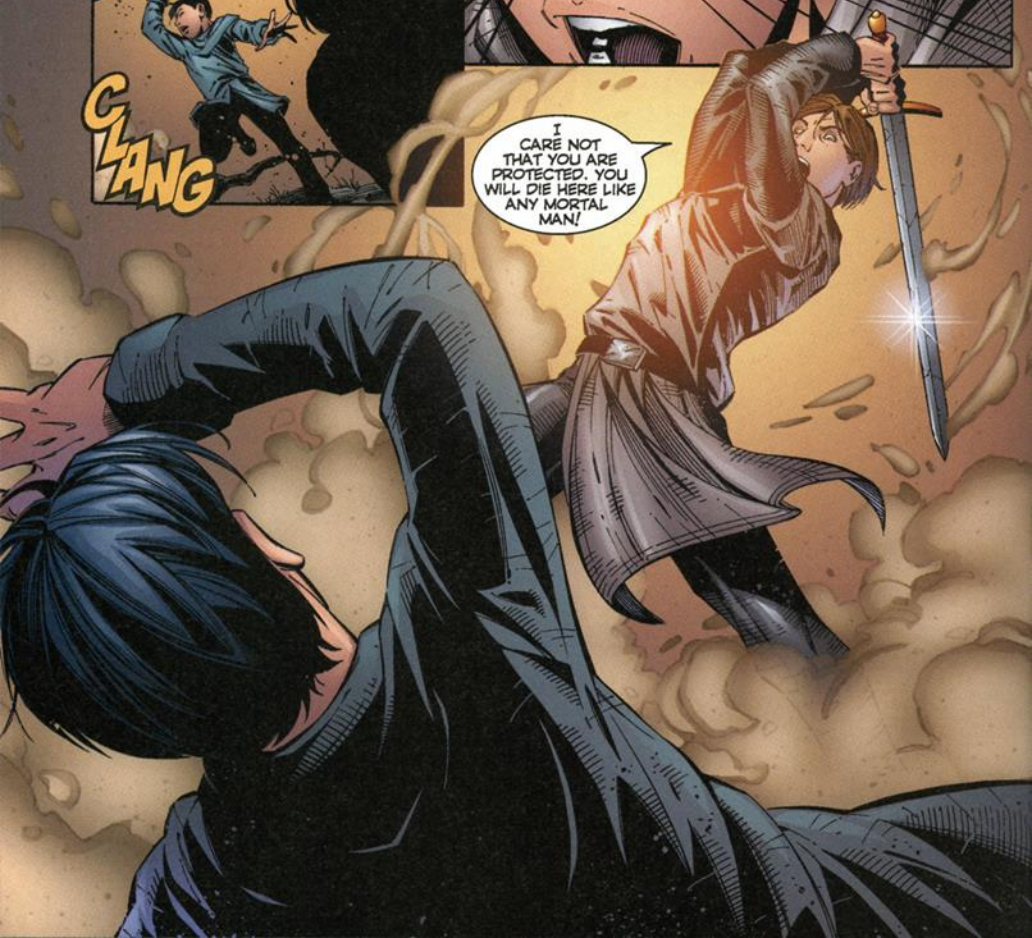


YOU ARE THE SON OF A
WHORE AND THE SPAWN
OF A DOG. I WILL END
THIS HERE!



CLANG

I
CARE NOT
THAT YOU ARE
PROTECTED. YOU
WILL DIE HERE LIKE
ANY MORTAL
MAN!





SOMETHING FLICKERED IN THE MAN'S DARK EYES AS HE GAZED AT THE BLOODSTAIN ON THE BOY'S SHIRT.



MAKE SURE THE WOMAN AND THE GIRL RECEIVE SAFE PASSAGE TO THEIR VILLAGE.



THE BOY COULD ONLY CLING TO THE HORSE AS THE MAN LED HIM INTO THE FOREST. THE OTHERS COULD ONLY WATCH AS THEY DISAPPEARED.



WHAT?

WHERE
AM I?

OH
RIGHT, THE
LAB.

I WONDER
HOW MY COMATOSE
PATIENT IS DOING?
SHE'S GETTING A LOT
MORE SLEEP THAN I --

OH MY
GOD!

THIS IS NOT
POSSIBLE!

TO BE CONTINUED!

Well, I hope if you're reading this that you've already made your way through the comic. If you have a lot of unanswered questions—stand by, the answers are coming, as well as a few twists and turns along the way.

Writing "Blood Legacy" as a comic was at times challenging, because it is actually based on a 400 page novel (hopefully out later in the year) and a story that spans six centuries. There are things that you can do in a novel that you can't do in a comic book, and vice versa. The trick is to figure out what you can do and when.

That said, I hope that I have succeeded in capturing at least the mood of the novel, which is at times very dark. One of my goals in writing this story was to get inside the head of an immortal being, no mean feat for a mere mortal like myself. But think about it, if you knew you weren't going to die, there would be a lot of things you really wouldn't care about...

The other goal I was going for was creating a realistic anatomy for such a creature—and that got me thinking about all sorts of things. Do they eat? What makes them heal? What makes them so strong? What makes them immortal? And to satisfy myself, I had to come up with reasonable answers for all these questions. I also wanted to know where all the legends came from—is there any truth there? Or is it all just fantasy?

Anyway, I'll cease my musings here, until next time. I wanted to end with a quick thanks to my brother, Matt, and to all the "perennially cool" worker bees at TopCow. If you ever had any fantasies about how fun it would be to work for a comic book company—you were absolutely right.

I welcome all feedback, so feel free to e-mail me at my address below. I know some of you are probably saying, "Where the hell are the vampires?"

Trust me, they're coming...

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