

Chapter 1 - Dr Polidori, Bram Stoker, Stephen King, Anne Rice, *on the shoulders of giants*

The grass and shrubbery were damp; it had rained lightly recently. In the quietness of a cold March night, Quillam separated the bushes pushing his way through into the cemetery. He could hear the pulsing of his blood, lubdub, lubdub, lubdub, lubdub, and feel the thumping of his heart resonating up his neck, a sensation of nausea in his stomach, bile in the back of his throat. Quillam was scared *shitless*, his brown eyes narrowed and searching the night around him, beads of cold sweat on his temples, making furrows through the sheen on his face. A crucifix, silver and reflecting the limited lunar light, was almost embedded in the palm of his left hand, gripped like his last lifeline. His right hand was outstretched, as if warding off any incoming threat. His brown suit reflected light from the most sodden patches.

He had heard that the cemetery and the street on the other side were haunted by a father and young son, and in some way, he longed for them to be his rendezvous. Unfortunately, what he was looking for, perhaps hunting for, was way beyond them, vastly more frightening. His vision darted in and amongst the tombstones and memorials, his ears trying to pick out any sounds out of the ordinary, to detect their origins. His body jerked left and right as he walked very hesitantly through the graveyard. He suppressed a mewling sound that wanted to burst from his tight, clenched mouth, his bowels feeling watery, his anus undecided about letting him down. His bladder, despite being relatively empty, was also considering joining the revolt.

His feet struck gravel, making an explosion of stone chips echoing across the domain of the dead, reverberating among the stone works. Both his bladder and anus almost spasmed as much as his facial expression, and it took all his might to keep continent, not vomit, or cry out. Lubdub, lubdub, lubdub, lubdub, his heart racing now, feeling like a wagon with its wheels about to fall off. He scanned left and right, looking for movement, listening for any reciprocal sounds.

He was closer to the old chapel now, mostly hidden in the dark haze, the clouds intermittently occluding the moonlight. He looked behind him. Nothing but the memorials to the past, rotting dead. It came upon him gradually, a prickling sensation to his right side, a crawling feeling across his skin as hairs started to rise. There was a sense of a very mild, cold, movement of the air in his direction, and his eyes were drawn to a large marble block, a mausoleum. All seemed as it should be, but then again, there shouldn't be smoke coalescing above it, surely? As the moon's gaze flickered across the scene, a figure started to solidify, taking a female form, crouching slightly, the face aiming straight at him, predatorial. '*Human!*', in the form of a breath, emphasis on the last syllable, sound leaping the five meters between them.

Quillam's body was struggling to keep control, rapidly transitioning into flight or fight mode, his face becoming as pale as the gravestones, eyes wide and round, mouth dry, breath trapped in his windpipe. Blood started to drop from his left hand, as he unconsciously gripped the metal cross harder, drip, drip, drip onto the gravel. He could feel drops of warm urine moistening his underwear, but his rectum decided to remain on his side and not empty. Meanwhile, a young, twentysomething woman was atop the tomb, scowling, revealing vulpine canines, her hands opening like ghastly flowers as her long fingers and claw-like nails spread out. She was clad in tattered remnants of trousers and a jacket, tousled black hair, all stained with earth, a face with the worst visage he could imagine in a medieval painting. The creature's gold eyes resolute.

He tried to speak, only a quiet screech emerging from his desiccated throat. Then the woman leapt up and forward, arms outstretched, mouth scowling, powerful muscles powering her spring.