

**Chapter 9:** 'Why don't you ever listen? It's you I'm talking to. This time it's your decision. We're into something new' Sharpe & Numan (Odell TP, 1985)

Something felt off to Deepak, gripping Nichols left arm hard as the trio came to a stop near some headstones and memorials a third of the way from the church. 'Yes, this is it, I think,' Quintain stated flatly, turning to Nichols and Deepak, who were suddenly transfixed, staring behind him and upwards. Quintain stood frozen, a plaintive expression, realising, and feeling, that they were not alone. He slowly turned, like a puppet with tangled strings, and Becks came into view. She was floating about a half meter from the ground, next to a headstone for a Stan Bushell. Meanwhile, Jennifer and Eva made their presence known to the rear of the three frightened men. More as moral support for Becks, but the men did not know that.

'Becks, for the love of God, what has happened to you, *why are you being like this?*', Quintain uttered, the words of a man who was close to the edge of his sanity, an abyss beyond. He had fallen to his knees, a supplicant praying to something holy, or unholy in this case. Nichols, still in a degree of shock and fear, thought Quintain was losing his nerve, and he reached into his right suit pocket slowly, touching his old army pistol. It felt reassuring. Deepak was still gripping his arm, trembling and gulping in air as he scanned all three of the Lilitus, a scream trying to climb out of his gullet like a scared monkey. Jennifer and Eva kept their gaze on Becks, not giving the men much attention, much respect. Becks, as if acknowledging the stares of her fellow Lilitus, had alighted on the ground in front of her father, looking directly at him, drinking him in, keeping a limited awareness of his companions.

'*Father...*,' she whispered, the word left to float to and beyond him. And then before anyone, human or vampire, could move, she swept her outstretched hand out, left to right, nails prominent, connecting with Quintain's neck, tearing the skin and then deeper into his jugular and carotid vessels. Jennifer and Eva tensed, their golden eyes looking triumphant. This time it was Nichols gripping Deepak's arm, stopping him from running forward to assist a dying Quintain. Rebounding from the momentum of Becks' fatal swipe, Quintain's head and then body twisted in the opposite direction, falling backwards while his lifeblood showered the adjacent ground, Becks, and gravestone of Stan Bushell, husband of Grammy Essy Bushell.

Becks was floating off the ground again, a single blood tear rolling down her cheek, looking down at the crumpled and jerking body of her father, the last of his lifeblood weakly ebbing from his neck. Jennifer and Eva were intently focusing on Nichols and Deepak, awaiting a reaction. None of them expected Grammy Essy, her grand-kids, and a number of the villagers, all undead, to come running through the cemetery, screaming a high pitched howl that reverberated around the memorial stonework like a ghastly whirlwind of sound. Nichols and Deepak did not know whether or not to be relieved or terrified. Meanwhile, Jennifer and Eva were momentarily confused, and Becks was still staring at her father, lying in all his lifeblood, a claret red sticky pool already soaking into the top layer of soil and matting the grass. His face looked more shocked than anything else, and Becks was relieved his death had been sudden and quick, as she had intended it to be. She still had the vestiges of some humanity. Completing the *father-slaying*, she was now a Lilitu, part of the Order, and released from her tether to this graveyard.

The vampire pack led by Grammy Essy crashed into the Lilitus and humans. An angry wail erupted from Grammy Essy as she saw the blood desecration of her beloved Stan's grave, startling all present. That gave sufficient time for a mental shout from Jennifer and she, Eva and momentarily, Becks, all became rapidly transparent, before winking out of existence, leaving the crazed scene. Nichols and Deepak were back-to-back as these new vampires surrounded them, Grammy Essy looking from Stan's grave and back to the two men. Nichols thought it was just not his day, while Deepak inwardly prayed to Vishnu, the Preserver. Both were now clear in their minds, they were terrified.