

# **The Vampire on Jefferson Street**

*by*  
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## **CHAPTER ONE** **BEGLEY HOUSE**

325 Jefferson Street is a large, stone, 3-story boarding house built in the year 1905 on a corner lot at the edge of downtown Brown's Creek and across the street from the campus of Proctor College.

The ground floor contains a parlor with fireplace, a dining room, a kitchen and the living quarters for the proprietor. The second floor and third floor each have four bedrooms opening onto a central common area and staircase. There are laundry facilities in the basement. The building is steam heated, as are most in the town.

It was originally designed to house a college social club, before fraternities and sororities were permitted on the campus. When the social club became a fraternity in 1915, the building was sold, and a larger fraternity house was built one street over. The property is now owned by a young widow who rents the bedrooms by the semester to very carefully selected upper level students who shared a need for quiet, respectable lodgings, together with a certain freedom of expression not always offered by other lodgings either in town or on the campus.

The overall environment is quite favorable for quiet study, and there is even a small library on the ground floor. One can converse, or read in the parlor downstairs, or in pleasant surroundings on each of the landings, or in one's room. By convention, there are no conversations held in the library.

Each student's room is equipped with a small iron bedstead, a chest of drawers with a mirror, a desk and chair, and a table fitted with electricity where one can make tea. Each room is also fitted with a small cabinet vented to the outside where things can be kept cool in all but the hottest summer months. Each room has a small lavatory, and each floor has a bathroom with shower and tub.

One is not expected to entertain in one's room after hours. The rooms lock, but the keys are all largely interchangeable, and locking one's room merely signifies that one wishes privacy, either for oneself or for one's belongings. When one's door is unlocked, anyone can leave notes, return items, find items, and so on.

House rules are not written down and there are no nasty nice signs reminding guests to do or not do something. One is expected to follow the rules of good breeding and adhere to high moral standards without being specifically told to do so. There are 8 bedrooms, and almost exactly that many students in a student body of some 4,000 who choose to live that way, so it is a nice arrangement all round.

Mary Susan Begley is the proprietress of the house. Widowed at 30 by a man of some property, she took advantage of that situation, after a suitable period of mourning, and purchased the club house when it came up for sale. She turned it into a boarding house immediately and over the years by reputation alone, it has become a haven for a certain type of free-thinking university student. She goes by Mary Susan, by the way, and not Mrs. Begley. She refuses to be chained to her dead husband's name for the rest of her life.

Mary Susan herself is somewhat old-fashioned in dress, her uncut black hair kept in a bun, and her dress invariably white over black usually with an apron. From a distance, she appears striking. Up close she is quite lovely in an understated way. She has had more admirers than she cares to know about, having no immediate desire to lose her independence a second time.

She is known for good manners, good sense, and tolerance for the beliefs of others. She believes her boarders should be in early on school nights and should be allowed to think and say what they please at all times. She keeps very close with what she hears and is known far and wide for her unwillingness to gossip.

The Red Scare was at its height, The bombing of the J. P. Morgan Bank having taken place in mid September, her house was a quiet sanctuary for free thinkers on the left.

There are two empty rooms on the third storey, which Mary Susan very much wants to fill by Thanksgiving. She is almost certain to do so once word gets out that there are vacancies. By college policy, only Juniors and Seniors are permitted to live off-campus.

Morning and evening meals are included in the rent, and served in the dining room. The dining room is really quite lovely, with a sideboard running along one side for buffet dishes and a long table which easily seats 12 in the center of the room under a rather ornate crystal chandelier. A formal photograph of Mary Susan's father watches over the table from the opposite wall. He seems stern, as one should in a photograph, but not particularly unkind for all that.

Breakfast is a come and go affair, with the dishes provided on the sideboard. Everyone is to serve themselves, European style, and generally they do not spend much time at breakfast, being usually late and in a hurry to get to class.

Everyone is expected to have somewhere to go in the morning and again after lunch. Lunch is not provided, but sometimes one or another of the students will come home briefly for lunch. Raiding the refrigerator is a popular pastime, especially towards the end of the month when allowances are almost gone. There were usually left-overs in the icebox along with bread and milk. The cook would let you know immediately if something was planned for dinner.

Dinner is served promptly at 5:30. This early time allows after dinner social conversation and the possibility of attending concerts, lectures, and meetings in the evening. Going "Out" is also a possibility, although frowned upon on week days. Remaining out past 10:30 can be arranged by asking Mary Susan for a key. On weekends, curfew is not enforced, and the last person back had better have the key. The rules about unchaperoned automobile rides

and travel off-campus were known, but not enforced. They were, from time to time, noticed, however.

The five students in residence, together with M. Durand generally spent a half hour or so in the parlor having tea after dinner before going off to their respective evening activities. They are expected to be back in Begley House by 10:30. This is what Mary Susan explained to their families when the contract for the room was made, and Mary Susan intends to be true to her word. Letters beginning “It has come to my attention...” and “I thought you ought to become aware...” are seldom written, but no one doubts that Mrs. Begley would do it if the first few admonishments were ineffective. She would feel it an ethical if not a moral Duty.

Tea in the parlor after diner is not mandatory, but is considered the correct thing to do. During this half hour, suitable after-dinner conversation is encouraged, and each one is expected to participate at least somewhat. After a suitable period, one or the other of the group may beg leave pleading a necessity for study, and all present may then depart for their respective evening activities. No further group social contact is expected until the next morning. By convention, the gentlemen bathe on odd-numbered days and the ladies on even-numbered days, unless they come in sometime during the day to bathe when things are a bit quieter.

Fathers generally pay for their children’s room and board by the month, including whatever spending money they feel appropriate. This can vary from month to month, and serves to keep the letters flowing home with news from school.

## CHAPTER TWO INTRODUCTIONS

Our story begins on an evening in September, 1920. It was cool in the evening after a rather warm afternoon. The leaves on the trees looked old and sad, but had not quite yet begun to turn fall colors. Classes had only just begun, and life at the boarding house was not yet quite settled.

The atmosphere in the parlor after dinner is always just a bit uncomfortable for the first week of so. The students of Begley House hadn't gotten to know each other, and did not know what they might have in common to discuss at tea, especially the first year students.

But Mary Susan excels at polite introductions and society in general. The parlor fire was small as there was little need yet for heat in the evening, it being only mid September, but it was cheerful and did provide a focus point, which was its primary purpose. Tea and cookies were present and Mary Susan offered and served each. This brought about a certain atmosphere among the young ladies and gentlemen that they had a social obligation to perform. Mary Susan brought an aura of refinement and courtesy everywhere she went, and truly enjoyed her efforts at civilizing the young people in her care. She took pride in her ability to establish an atmosphere and guide a conversation without saying very much. She introduced each of the new lodgers to each of the returning lodgers one by one, started conversations on mutually interesting subjects, and then immediately abandoned the new conversation for her tea and cookie service. It was a gift she had. It was very difficult, even for the young men, to utter or even think a vulgar thought with one of Mary Susan's fine china teacups in his hand.

Constance Claire was a young lady of Senior standing in English Band Journalism. She wished to become a journalist for a newspaper and travel on assignment to foreign countries. Meanwhile, she adored writing and was on the staff of the college newspaper. She was full of energy and inspiration, a delight to converse with, and very pretty in an energetic sort of way. Constant motion was the closest constant to her home. She was known as a bright young thing from a well-to-do family, who gave her rather too much allowance for someone supposed to be learning responsibility.

Next in rotation was John Watson, who, rather stiffly, announced that he was a Junior in Pre-Med, and therefore had two years yet to complete at Proctor College before entering medical school. He had already provisionally been accepted at one, and was hoping for a few more offers. He intended to choose the most prestigious of them. He intended to devote his professional career to research rather than private practice. This was his first year at Begley house and he was quite proud of being accepted as a Junior into Mrs. Begley's small circle.

The handsome newcomer spoke next. His name was Robert Miller, he said firmly, and he was a Senior Political Science major. He had transferred here from a much larger university on the East Coast. No one presumed to ask him why he had done that. Had he been asked, he would have said that it was a matter of finances. He was a very well-spoken gentleman with reddish hair and a very sophisticated way of speaking which he used especially

when speaking to the ladies.

His acceptance was based primarily, if reluctantly, on an immediate cash payment for the rest of the year. One of Mrs. Begley's young female students had not returned for classes after the summer break. She had been allowed out of her contract on very short notice by Mrs. Begley. No explanation was given to the others. Mrs. Begley did not offer any explanation to the others.

This late opening after the normal time for the arrangements for off-campus living had put a serious strain on Mrs. Begley's financial plans. Mr. Miller seemed polite enough, to be sure, and that was certainly a plus. No one locally could say anything about him. By his own outspoken statements he was a firm believer in all things of the political left, but Mary Susan Begley wasn't at all sure that he had really given those ideas very much thought. She hoped that discussions with the more intellectual of her boarders would smooth out some of his "shoot first and sort it out later" attitude. She certainly wasn't prepared to sponsor a street movement from her home, no matter how popular those activities seemed to be these days. Her home was to be a haven for alternative thinking, not a hotbed of unsocial behavior.

She also hoped that young Robert would not attempt to prey on the women who lived here. His manor was suave, and he obviously thought quite a lot of himself. Her house had 8 bedrooms for let, and she insisted that both men and women were to be accepted.

Amelia spoke next, if you could call it that. She was thin to the point of being ethereal, very blond, and very serious. She had the rather startling blue eyes that went with that and she would have been quite beautiful had she smiled more often. But life was much too serious to smile at it, thus her blond beauty was cold and remote.

Although she looked like she hadn't eaten much for quite some time, and rarely did, she did indulge herself with the smallest cookie and a cup of tea, graciously offered by Mary Susan. She very quietly told those who inquired that she was studying German with an emphasis in the great German philosophers. She spoke very quietly, and seemed quite unwilling to contribute in the smallest way to the general feeling of social well-being.

Unfortunately for her, Constance Claire heard her, and furthermore was paying attention at that precise instance. What she said therefore caused quite a stir. The Great War had been over for almost two years now, but events in Europe were still on many student's minds. Many Americans had been fearful of a German invasion of the United States and were now fearful of a Bolshevik takeover. When Amelie confessed, reluctantly, that she had spent the entire previous year actually in Germany, interest swelled. Did she really speak German? How had she learned it? What was it like in Germany? What was the University of Berlin like? Constance Claire was especially insistent, using her interviewing techniques on the reluctant Amelia.

Amelia answered some of the questions very briefly and some of them not at all. She spoke German from her childhood, her family was German. She spoke English as a second language, but being truly bilingual, she spoke English without any accent.

She had visited the part of her family that still lived in Germany and spent the academic

year abroad that foreign language students normally did their junior year one year early. The University of Berlin was a very large university. She ignored all questions about current politics in Germany. Robert in particular asked her uncomfortable questions on her political beliefs, which she evaded by simply ignoring the question.

She was withdrawn by nature, and knew that Germans were not in very high standing here in America. She and her family had suffered much by being of German extraction. She also knew that polite acceptance in Mary Susan Begley's parlor would most certainly be followed by much less polite discussions once out of her presence.

She was not asked, and so did not reveal that most of Germany was starving and freezing, that both the economy and the government were in a total shambles, and that violence and hatred lay heavily upon the land of Beethoven and Goethe.

Amelie became so very uncomfortable answering all those questions that Mary Susan had to rescue her by calling on Louis to introduce himself.

Louis was quite willing to do so. He was a pre-lawyer, and would finish his undergraduate work this spring. He had applied to a few law schools but had not yet been formally accepted. He was comfortable around people and would enjoy practicing general law in a not-very-large city. He might even get into politics, on the left side of the spectrum, he quickly added. He had essentially no firm beliefs of his own, which would make him an excellent politician.

The reception was over by common consent at 8:30, several begging to be excused to do a lot of reading in their rooms.

The next morning, everyone reported for breakfast at seven thirty. Mary Susan Begley had an excellent cook and atmosphere was efficient but not rushed. Breakfast was offered buffet style in the large, well lit dining room. Mary Susan was there, pouring tea and coffee and welcoming everyone to the new morning in a bright and cheerful way.

After breakfast, all of Mary Susan Begley's guests went across the street and across the campus to their classes. The cook's helper arrived, and the morning's housekeeping began.

Over time, the interest in Amelia gradually quieted down. She rarely spoke either at dinner or at tea and then only when directly spoken to. The others took her to be quite serious sometimes, and at other times found her aloof and snobbish. Who did she think she was, just because she had spent a year in Europe, to look down her nose at the others? Even Robert Miller with his dark references to a world wide workers revolution rarely brought any response from Amelia, although she sometimes watched Robert and the responders rather more closely than ordinary, taking her focus off the fire to look slowly from one to the other around the room.

One evening in late October, Amelia was even quieter and more somber than usual. She seemed quite morose, in fact, and responded in monosyllables to every social overture. This dampened the conversation and the others became quite irritated with her, finally giving up trying to talk to her at all. She soon left the gathering, going up to her room without a word. Everyone seemed relieved.

Mary Susan Begley seldom joined in her guests' conversations directly. She preferred to listen and took pleasure in making sure that everyone had tea and biscuits and was comfortable. She cleared as necessary, poked the fire, and overheard quite a bit without being obvious about it. She too wondered what new depressing bit of philosophy was troubling the frail and introverted Amelia.

When the others left the parlor for their evening's activities, she went quietly up to Amelia's room and tapped on the door. When she said her name, she was invited in. Amelia was sitting on the straight chair staring at a textbook open on the small desk in front of her. She invited Mary Susan to sit in the only other chair. She seemed in no better mood than earlier, but also seemed, strangely, not to want Mary Susan to leave. She clumsily offered tea, saying that she was just going to make some for herself and a second cup would be no trouble at all.

Mary Susan is a very preceptive woman, and it seemed to her that this was not the time for vague polite conversation. She got straight to the point.

"Amelia, what's wrong? I don't want to pry, but if I can help at all, even by just listening, I want to do that."

There was a very long silence, during which the women looked at each other with quiet expressions. Then, as though she had thought it over carefully, and decided that she would, indeed, speak, Amelia said, "I can't tell you. At least, I can't tell you here. It's a long story, and I do mean a long story, and the walls have ears here."

"Can it wait until this weekend?" Mary Susan asked, "My father owns a small get-away cabin not terribly far from here. It is my occasional duty to see about the place, and I must go there this week-end to make sure it is safe and secure for the winter. It is a rather cozy place, far from the nearest neighbor and we can surely talk there. Would you like to come with me? We can stay overnight in the cabin and have all the time in the world to talk."

It could wait until the weekend, and Amelia seemed somewhat brightened by the prospect. They would leave Saturday morning. Mary Susan had an woods. They would spend the night in the cabin and return on Sunday evening. There really wasn't going to be much to do at the cabin, and Amelia wouldn't get behind at all in her studies. It seemed a good arrangement, and both women would surely benefit from it. Constance Claire could manage the boarding house while Mary Susan was out.

### CHAPTER THREE LITTLE CABIN IN A WOOD

Saturday morning, after a bumpy ride over roads that really weren't roads, the young women came to the clearing where Mary Susan's father's camping cabin stood. It was about noon and the day had turned from morning sun into advancing gloom. So, first things first, they opened and aired the cabin, then gathered wood from the wood shed, water from the well, and unloaded the provisions from the Ford. It was distinctly cooler when they went inside to start fires in the fireplace and the stove.

The cabin boasted two rooms and each one had a window with glass panes. The floor was wooden, and altogether it was rather a nice cozy cabin, suitable for a family getting away from the city for a few weeks.

For Mary Susan, the sole purpose of visiting the cabin was to check to see that it was properly prepared for the winter, that the shutters were tight and the well still good and the place cleaned up. Harry, who lived on a nearby farm, was supposed to do that, but it was always better to check up on him, if for no other reason than to praise him for his efforts. Mary Susan did allow, however, that she didn't want to spend the night alone out here and had been secretly hoping for company.

They didn't speak of Amelia's problem until after dinner, over tea. By then it was dark and a cold windy rain was falling. There was no ceiling in the cabin and the sound of the rain on the roof added to the cozy feeling created first by the soup and then by the tea and cookies. Amelia looked across the wooden planked table at Mary Susan face hovering over her tea cup in the light of the table lamp. She thought what a beautiful and confident woman she was.

But it was time to begin the tale.

"As you know," Amelia said, "my family is divided, with many of us still living in Germany. I was actually born there, and came to the United States in 1905 when I was barely five with my mother to join my father. He came across first to get established before sending for my mother and me to join him."

"So I learned English after learning German, and we always spoke German at home and in our little community."

"We were quite concerned about our family in Germany when that awful war broke out in 1914, but we couldn't visit, and even writing was quite difficult. If we exchanged three letters a year it was a miracle. So when the awful thing finally ended two years ago, we made plans to visit."

"I wanted to study philosophy in Germany and we learned that I could do that. I was accepted at the University of Berlin. I went during the summer of 1919, when I was 19 years old and had been attending Proctor College already, as you know, for my freshman year. In my major, the trip to Germany would be expected if not absolutely essential, but usually in

one's third year rather than the second. My family in the United States was most anxious to learn what the situation actually was for my family in Germany, so I went a year early to see them. I traveled there in the company of my Uncle Kurtis, he being the one who was the most free to travel at that time."

"The trip across the ocean was very pleasant, but once in Germany things were very bad. People were starving, and everything was a perfect shambles. So many of their young men had died in the fighting and left widows and children with no support. My own family was very well off by comparison. Only one cousin was of military age and he had been very lucky to have returned safe and sound."

"From my family's home in northern Germany, I traveled in August to Berlin. Uncle Kurtis found accommodations for me in a very pleasant boarding house close to the University. I was enrolled in my classes and set for the year when Uncle Kurtis returned to the United States."

Mary Susan thought somewhat dryly that the story so far lacked a little something in the drama department.

"I met a man."

"Now where have I heard that line before?", thought Mary Susan, suddenly jerked from her fairy tale mode of listening. She waited for Amelia to continue, and for a moment it seemed that Amelia had come to the end of her tale. But, no, there was more.

"He is a very nice young man. We met in the classes I took. I was the first American he had ever known who spoke German. He thought my accent was cute."

"So you met a man who thought your accent was cute. So what?" thought Mary Susan, "Oh well, we really do have all night for this."

Again the long pause. Mary Susan wondered if she were supposed to say something, or at least to understand something. But if you look like Amelia, meeting a man who thinks your accent is cute at the University of Berlin did not seem so very strange to her. There must be hundreds if not thousands of men at the University of Berlin, and she couldn't imagine a single one of them who wouldn't want to meet Amelia, cute accent and all.

"He was interested in politics, or rather, in the future of his country and of the world. He is a Socialist. He wants to change the world."

Another pause. Mary Susan listened to the rain pounding on the shingled roof. It was really a downpour. She wondered if she could finish the story for Amelia. She was pretty sure she could. Just as she was about to, Amelia began to speak again.

Looking directly and unflinchingly at Mary Susan, Amelia said, "We fell in love, in Germany. I didn't know I could do that, but I did. He had an apartment and we sort of fell in together." She stiffened her face a little bit. "I mean, I moved in with him for seven months."

Well, it's out at last. Mary Susan knew exactly what this was all about. She had noticed that Amelia had been off her feed lately, even for her, and had been quiet and moody since school started. The poor lamb was 'with child', as the saying goes.

Her next thoughts were sudden and brutal. "Will I help her become once again without

child? Do I know anyone who can help her?"

She surprised herself with the easy resolution of her own mind. Yes, she would help find someone to relieve her much too young tenant of this undesirable state of affairs. She had always wondered what her reaction would be if she were so requested, and it turned out to be very easy after all.

"So you are, shall we say, 'in the family way?'" Mary Susan asked. She sounded somewhat brutal, even to herself, but we were, after all, two women all alone in the woods and if we couldn't talk plainly here, we couldn't talk plainly anywhere. Just to show that her interest was more than morbid curiosity, Mary Susan added, "If you are, I will help you."

"Oh no!" Amelia responded immediately, throwing her hands over her face. "It's nothing like that!" She seemed quite horrified at the suggestion. "How could she think that of me?" she wondered. But she had moved in with a man for seven months. What was Mary Susan supposed to think? The second thought was "Wasn't Mary Susan wonderful about it all."

She spoke, "Thank God it's nothing like that. No, Klaus is the one who is in trouble, not I. At least, I think not I. We lived together, and slept together, but we were very careful, about that. And then I had to go back to America and Klaus couldn't come with me, and it was horrible."

"I'll just bet!" thought Mary Susan, still defending her ground viciously. "It saves him a lot of trouble." Mary Susan had a love-hate relationship with men. She loved them enough to hate them, or possibly the other way around, she wasn't sure. She had been hurt a few times by them, and been very lucky a few other times, so that nowadays she was very wary. The next man she got close to was going to be pretty carefully chosen. Anyway, she wasn't quite ready to let Klaus off the hook.

Amelia continued: "Klaus was involved in the German Socialist movement. I got involved in it with him. Here in America we must be somewhat discrete talking about Socialism, but in Germany it is far worse. In Germany words can escalate quickly into violence. People there are very committed to their own opinions. They don't just talk about changing the government, they are doing things about it, and Klaus was in all of that and I was too. Once I even met Rosa Luxembourge at a rally."

"Then in just a few weeks the whole movement changed it's attitude. The Bolsheviks took over the movement. They wanted to force Socialism on the country. They wanted to destroy rather than to build. Klaus did not want to do that, and left the movement, just as I was leaving to return to the United States. He told me that we would both be returning to a former life."

Although it still sounded to Mary Susan like the old "love 'em and leave telling her.

"But it wasn't quite that simple for Klaus. He was rather important to the old organization and had many friends. Some of them did not leave the movement. I'm afraid that Klaus has gone into hiding and that the new leaders will kill him, if they haven't done so already. He knows too many of the names of the Bolsheviks, and of their financial friends. He has

become very dangerous to the movement. Rosa Luxembourg was murdered by the Berlin police, but had the police not murdered her, the Bolsheviks surely would have.”

Mary Susan was listening carefully now, and wondering, since it appeared that Klaus was just as pure as snow, what this had to do with her, or even what Amelia was supposed to do about it. All of this was taking place so far away. But maybe she was just expected to listen. If so, she would require another cup of tea.

The teapot was on the back of the stove keeping warm. When they had each poured a second cup of tea and returned to their chairs in front of the fireplace, Mary Susan noticed that Amelia had a letter in her hand.

“Last week I got a letter in the mail. It came by a very strange route, through the University rather than to either my home or my school address.”

She handed Mary Susan the letter. The envelope was addressed to Amelia Landsdorf, care of Proctor College, and had been routed variously throughout the campus, ending up in the Foreign Language department.

“It’s not that often that one receives personal correspondence via one’s German professor,” Amelia said dryly.

Dear Amelia Landsdorf,

Please excuse my terrible English. I am the friend of your friend. He would himself write if he were able. I wish I could give you his address, but I have no thought where he is at the present moment. So I write this letter in his place and hope it finds you and your family all well in America.

I am doing much better right now, and we all hope for a better future. Give my regards to your family.

Very Truly Yours, Micky

P. S., The ages you asked for are 13 for the young man, 37 for his mother and 45 for his father. I hope this helps you.

Mary Susan read the letter very carefully, then looked up at Amelia. “Seems rather

confusing, actually nonsensical. Does it mean anything to you?"

"I have read it over and over. To me, it is a very frightening letter. First of all, why would Micky ever write to me? I met him one time only, very casually, when I was with Klaus at a café. Mickey isn't his real name, actually. It is a nickname that Klaus used. I don't think I ever heard his actual name. Second, why write to me in English? We never spoke in English at all! I met almost no one who spoke English while I was at the University. And why doesn't Klaus write for himself? And I don't have the slightest idea what the post script is about. I have never asked Klaus or Mickey or anyone at all for anyone's ages, and I have no idea whom he is talking about."

"My goodness, what a puzzle. I don't suppose you detected any inclination towards madness in this 'friend of your friend'?"

"Well," Amelia smiled ever so slightly, "You can't tell everything about a person in a single meeting in a café, but he certainly seemed sane enough at the time."

"Then there must be some meaning in the letter. He certainly went to a lot of trouble to find you. Why would he send it to the College?"

"The only thing I can think of is that he didn't know my address. We talked about me a little bit at the café, and I must have mentioned Proctor College. Possibly that's all he knew."

"Why not write the letter in German?" Mary Susan asked. "Why would one write in a foreign language when one knows that one's reader reads your native language perfectly well?" Mary Susan paused. "Unless... Do we still censor letters here, do you suppose? Two years after the war is over?"

"I don't know. The Government certainly censored ours to our family in Germany during the war. Sometimes the letters arrived from Germany months late. They never had enough translators to keep up, and of course all the letters had to go through Holland."

"So, possibly, your Mickey was trying to avoid a huge delay in translation by writing his letter in English. He hoped it would get through the censors faster that way. He certainly didn't appear to want to say anything incriminating, or even slightly suspicious in his letter."

"He didn't seem to want to say anything at all!" Amelia exclaimed.

Mary Susan tried to put all the anomalies together into some sort of logical framework. It certainly seemed to her that this young man, Micky, wanted rather badly to correspond with Amelia, but the letter itself contained virtually nothing. No information at all. No names. And no return address, either. How the devil was Amelia supposed to write back, even supposing that she wanted to?

"Now I might write a pretty innocent letter the first time I wrote to someone, especially when I didn't know the address for sure, but I would certainly request the address, and also certainly give my own." Mary Susan thought. She read through the letter several more times, sentence by sentence. It was a very short letter, and the more she read it the more nonsensical it became.

Then there was the really cryptic part about the ages. Anyone would expect a little more

information about that. Suppose Amelia didn't remember to whom the ages referred, as, in fact, she didn't. How foolish to leave out that information! In fact, there were almost no definite statements in the letter at all. The letter seemed to serve no purpose whatever.

Her mind kept going back to the ages. They seemed pretty definite. Shining forth like some sort of surveyor's stake rising proudly from the middle of a barren desert of nonsense.

Then suddenly she thought she had it. The letter was hiding something. It had a second meaning! She read it again, and ended up with the same questions Amelia had posed. Why was Klaus unable to write? She supposed that 'the friend of your friend' did refer to Klaus, Amelia's lost love. It now seemed that he was even more lost than ever.

If there was a hidden meaning to the letter, it certainly was remaining hidden to her. She looked at the ages again. How very strange it all was! It was almost as though the numbers might have an importance in themselves. What was Amelia supposed to do with those numbers? Idly she numbered the words in the letter. The 13th word was "He", the 37th word was "at" and the 45th word was "letter". She underlined those three words lightly with her pencil in the lamplight.

"What does 'He at letter' mean to you, my fine friend?" she asked Amelia.

"He at letter -- nothing whatever." Amelia responded.

Mary Susan looked at the underlined words. She allowed the paper to swim in front of her eyes. Suddenly it came to her. It was not three words, but two. "Heat" and "Letter".

Although it was somewhat rare for Mary Susan to follow instructions, she did so now. She held the letter up close to the chimney of the oil lamp. Large words appeared. They formed an address. With Amelia looking over her shoulder, they read.

Amelia Landsdorf  
General Delivery  
Hannibal, Missouri USA

When Mary Susan put the letter back down on the table, the address disappeared again as the paper cooled.

"Oh my great heavenly stars above!" Mary Susan exclaimed, emphasizing each word separately, "Secret writing with invisible ink! What a peculiar way to correspond! Someone wants to write you a letter and they don't want anyone else to know about it. Why is it a secret? And why Hannibal for pity's sake. It's an all day train ride from here!" Mary Susan very nearly sputtered all of this.

The rain continued, filling the silence. After nearly a minute, Amelia broke the rainy silence. She was very solemn now. She was remembering all that she could of the single meeting with Micky. They had talked about America, she remembered. When she said she was attending a university in Missouri, that had reminded Micky of Mark Twain. He had once read “Life on the Mississippi”.

Klaus sent this letter to her pretending to be Micky to tell her about the letter he wrote to her in Hannibal. He didn’t send his letter to her at her university address. He didn’t dare send it to her home address in America. He didn’t know any other address for her. The only other city he knew about in Missouri was Hannibal, because of Mark Twain. So he had addressed his real letter to Amelia at General Delivery, Hannibal. It must be a very important letter indeed, but she would have to go to Hannibal to get it. She said as much to Mary Susan.

“Well, we can’t go tonight, dearest chuck. All the trains have left, and besides, it’s raining. Now be a good girl, burn the funny letter in the fireplace and let’s go to bed. Tomorrow we will plan our trip to Hannibal.”

“We, you say? Will you come with me, then?”

“Of course, silly, you’ve got me into this now. Besides, you obviously need a chaperon. Your poor family sends you off to Europe for enlightenment and you hop into bed with the first man you meet. Falling in love with a Socialist, for Heaven’s sake! And at your tender age!”

“What’s wrong with my age?” Amelia wanted to know. “I’m old enough!”

“Obviously. So was Juliette. Alas, when I think of all that I have missed in the last ten or so years, it’s simply appalling. Now go to bed.” Mary Susan was taking this more seriously now. It might be many things, she supposed, but it wasn’t a joke.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HANNIBAL

The next Friday, early in the morning, the two women left on the train for Hannibal. It came through Browns Creek at 7:15 in the morning, and there were very few people at the station. They were the only ones who got on the train.

They arrived at the beautiful Hannibal train station at noon, and hurried to the downtown post office. They encountered no difficulty retrieving the letter. They would neither be observed nor bothered in the busy station coffee shop, so they went immediately there to open and read the letter. Amelia read the letter first, then silently turned it over to Mary Susan. Translated from German, it read:

Liebchen,

I write this letter hoping it finds you well and safe far away over there in America. I miss you terribly, but also I am very glad that you are not here. People are not safe here in Germany. The Socialist movement has incurred the wrath of the Freicorps and the government, as though they weren't the same thing.

You might know that Luxembour and Liebknecht were murdered by the government after the uprising. They didn't even want to begin the revolution at this time, and didn't want to be any part of it. And still, they were murdered.

So now the Socialists have new leadership, and I am no longer part of the movement. I spoke out against the Bolsheviks in a meeting and so lost my position as secretary. Now I have two enemies, the Freicorps and the Bolsheviks. I do not any longer go out of doors often, especially at night. The devil take all this popularity!

But, Leibchen, there are more important things to tell you of than my personal danger. There is also danger to you, and even to your country.

Although I have lost my position in the Central Committee, I still have friends there, and they risk their lives to tell me that plans are being made to send trained agents-provocateur from Germany and Russia to the United States to start the Revolution over there. The Bolsheviks believe that a small, professional group of agents can sway the socialist and labor movements in

the United States towards general strikes and then violent revolution. If you can read the recent speeches of Vladimir Lenin all this will be explained to you.

They are probably wrong about the outcome, but the danger of an attempt is very real.

There are such agents already in place in your country, and I have heard that one of them is now at your college. That is why I am being hunted, and why you will be also. I do not know his name, God knows that I would tell you if I did. I do not know how long he has been in place. He is likely to be one of your fellow students. He will be ruthless, and his first job will be to identify you, and then to kill you.

Please believe me. The Bolsheviks are not like the Socialists you and I met with and marched with when you were here. They serve a different cause, that of world revolution, and they will not stop at violence, even murder, to achieve that goal.

They asked me about you, and I told them nothing. That is a second reason that I am now a refugee from my own people. The first reason is that I am not a Bolshevik.

I may very well be dead by the time you receive this. I asked my friend Micky to send it for me, however he could, so that you could not be traced back to me and thus identified. I can only hope that he succeeded.

I can not tell you what to do. The authorities in your country should be warned, but if you go to them, I do not think you will be believed. I do think that if whoever they have sent to your college identifies you, he will kill you without even caring what you might know. Please let me believe that you will do everything to save yourself. Once the attempt at a revolution in your country fails, then I think you will be safe. There will no longer be any reason to act against you. Especially if I am already dead. I shall in any event take steps to insure that I am not captured alive.

I shall love you all the rest of my life, and my memory of you will be my final thought when the end comes.

Lovingly, Klaus

The train was almost full on the return trip, and the women did not want to talk about the letter for fear of being overheard. But since that was all that was on either of their minds, they soon fell into a contemplative silence which lasted for the entire trip.

“What a strange little wildflower our Amelia is,” thought Mary Susan. “She is so young, and ethereal, but she has seen and done so much! I have always wondered how such a frail little pansy like that survives. I wonder who wants to kill her?”

Mary Susan always thought logically, and today was no exception. She wondered who would fear what Amelia knew, if they knew she knew it. Obviously, the secret Bolshevik would. Amelia might betray him to the authorities, whoever they might be. When it comes right down to it, who are the “Authorities” in our sleepy little college town. The local Sheriff? Some sort of Federal Agent? Who would believe her fairy story about the Bolsheviks coming to America to lead a revolution? Then she thought of a number of people, some of them rather important in the city, who would love to believe it. She remembered during the war when some of the madder citizens were saying that the Germans were going to invade the United States, and we would all have to speak German when that happened. How could rational people believe such tarradiddle! But believe it they did, and would believe it again, in these times, with “Reds” being uncovered all over the place.

It seemed to Mary Susan that they were going to have to find out who the Bolshevik was before the Bolshevik found out who they were.

She thought of political science students she knew. Which of them would favor the Bolshevik cause? Probably none of them, she thought, but she wished she had paid more attention to what had been said in her parlor and by whom over the past few weeks.

And would an agitator on a mission major in politics, and possibly expose himself for what he was? Or would he remain free from any leftist connections at all? He might join groups that he thought might follow him when he started his big putsch, but how likely was that in the political science class? Not very, she thought.

After what seemed an endless journey, the train arrived exactly on time, at 8:30 at night, and the women went directly from the station to the safest and most private place they could think of, which turned out to be a booth in a diner near the station. They did not dare to return immediately to Begley House. They knew that the occupants would all be gathered in the parlor and they would have to answer questions about how they had spent their day. They would confer secretly without appearing to have done so.

Tea was not the usual drink served in this diner, but with the town full of students trying hard to be sophisticated, tea was served, and with a day-old doughnut that wasn't really too bad, they sat down to discuss the events of the day.

“I can't believe this is really happening. Do you believe that someone is really trying to kill your friend, and you?”

“I'm afraid I do. And I wish I knew how Klaus was betrayed. What if I did it, talking about my stay in Germany? I wish I could remember what I said and to whom I said it.”

“I remember the introductory tea the middle of September, but you didn't seem to want

to talk then. You didn't say much at all, in fact. I seem to remember that several of the guests were curious about your stay in Germany, but who wouldn't be? I remember you not liking it much, and that I changed the subject. Constance Claire was asking questions, but I expect that was for a story in the college newspaper. She won't publish anything without your permission, I don't expect."

Amelia didn't seem to be listening any more. Her mind was wandering around asking questions. Who had she talked to at the Introductory Tea. Why hadn't Klaus given her address to Mickey. Perhaps he couldn't. Perhaps there wasn't time. Or perhaps the address wasn't safe. Perhaps the agitator mentioned in the letter knew that she was receiving letters from Germany. They would have to know who she knew in Germany, but that was written on the letter. But they would have to know who that was, that he was someone they needed to silence. So whoever is looking at the envelopes knows who Klaus is.

Constance Claire went on, speaking in the background of Amelia's thoughts.

"Who would know you have been receiving letters from Germany, I wonder? Everybody in Begley House, I suppose. Where did you get the letters before you moved here? In fact, did you ever get letters addressed to Begley House? If not, then no one here would know about your friend. Unless they actually read the letters. Goodness, is someone reading your mail, do you suppose? How outrageous!"

Mary Susan didn't grasp immediately that such letters would undoubtedly have been written in German, thus limiting the number of people who actually could have read the letters. "Were the letters addressed to you here at the University?"

"Yes. I wouldn't want my family to know anything about my German lover, would I?"

Amelia had become her usual dreamy, unresponsive self. She did not want to continue the discussion. She sat and drank her tea and ate her doughnut and listened to Mary Susan, responding very seldom and very briefly to questions. She wondered about letters to someone here at the college, sent from Germany. She wondered if someone had been corresponding about her with someone here. She wondered who that would be. How would she be able to find out if letters from Germany had been delivered to Proctor College. But she saw that it was useless. The Bolsheviks probably wouldn't trust the mail, with everything from Germany probably still being opened and read by the government.

Eventually Mary Susan gave up her one-sided conversation and they walked home. Begley House was quiet by 10 pm, everyone being either in their rooms or out of the house. Only Constance Claire herself noticed the women's return. She was clearing up after tea, and greeted the women as though nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. They had told her simply that they were going to Hannabal for the day and would not be back for dinner. They had not offered an explanation, and Constance Claire had reluctantly not requested one. She said that she was glad for their safe return and hoped that their journey had been a productive one. They smiled, or at least Mary Susan smiled, and assured their landlady for a day that it had been a productive day, and retired to their respective chambers.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### KLAUS

The trip to Hannibal had cost Amelia a couple of lectures in philosophy and in German. She didn't mind missing the German, she could read the assignment without help from class, and a glance at a classmate's notes for the day would tell her if anything important for her to know had happened during class.

The philosophy class was a different thing. She enjoyed the class. It was one of the few places where she could express herself fully and joyfully, no matter what she said. The course was conducted in German and therefore nothing said in class ever found its way anywhere else. To understand what was being said, you had to speak German, and if you could do that, you had enough discretion not to translate the ideas into English carelessly.

A week went by without incident. The leaves were turning now, and there were fewer warm afternoons. Classes had settled, papers were being written, or at least contemplated, books were being read, notes were being organized in preparation for the first major exams. Amelia was her natural serious self, deeply interested in her studies, as might have been expected, although she did show a bit more interest in the others at tea than she had before the trip to Hannibal. After all, someone was looking for her with malice, and she had no idea how to determine who that was.

As each day passed, Mary Susan wondered tried to remain engaged in Amelia's possible enemy, but she saw nothing irregular, and from time to time the thought came to her that perhaps the whole thing was some sort of a hoax, or possibly a misunderstanding.

One Tuesday morning, however, she looked around for her at breakfast and found Amelia missing. She thought that Amelia did not take care of herself nearly well enough and went to her room to roust out the recluse.

She knocked on Amelia's door, was asked who she was, said who she was, and was told to come in. Amelia was sitting on her bed crying. She looked like she had been crying for a long time.

"Whatever is wrong, Amelia?" Mary Susan asked.

Amelia took a long time to think, then, having come to a decision, said with ice in her voice, "Can you seriously keep a secret if I tell you something?"

Quite taken aback, Mary Susan assured Amelia that she was quite well known in some circles to be able to do precisely that. She carefully closed the door, bolted it, and sat on the bed next to Amelia.

"Klaus is dead." Amelia said softly but clearly. "His body was found floating in the Berlin canal three weeks ago. He was already dead by the time we read the letter from Hannibal."

Mary Susan couldn't immediately believe what she heard. In the silence that followed her mind raced from idea to idea. How did Amelia know that Klaus was dead, there hadn't been any letters from Germany. Possibly it wasn't the same Klaus. It was an accident. Amelia was

right about how serious this is. I can't believe it! Those things don't happen. Not really. When she could finally find words, she remembered, barely, to say that she was sorry to hear it, then whispered, "How did you hear about it?"

"I read it in the Berliner Tagblatt. The college library subscribes to it. The most recent one arrived yesterday. It is the Sunday edition from three weeks ago. I read it last night. I'm sure I'm the only one here who knows about it, because I'm the only one who reads the Tagblatt. I'm probably the only one who can," she added bitterly. "They said it was an accidental death. But it wasn't. The Bolsheviks got him. I'm responsible. His relationship with an American girl last year must have frightened them badly. They found him and they killed him!"

Mary Susan put her arm around the smaller woman's shoulder.

"I'm so sorry. What a horrible, horrible thing to happen."

"He told me it would happen. I didn't believe it. I just couldn't imagine killing over politics. It's so unlike us, here, in America. It just seemed so much more important in Germany. Is it really that important, Mrs. Begley?"

"I'm sure don't know. I expect I would have to be awfully desperate to be willing to kill. I've never been that desperate. The war didn't happen here, it happened over there, I never saw it. We don't seem to care how we are governed over here, as they do in other places."

"I haven't told anyone this, but I planned to return to Germany once I finished my Bachelor's degree here. I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Klaus, in the new Germany. We really loved each other."

"I lost my husband, not too long ago." Mary Susan said, "It isn't the same thing, I know. I didn't really love him. Oh, I was fond of him, in a way, and he was a decent and honorable man, but we never loved each other. He needed a wife, and I thought I needed a husband. I've since realized that I don't. But I did feel pretty low about it after he was gone. It sounds cruel to say it, but you do get over it. Life really does go on. Maybe not right away, but eventually."

Mary Susan was pretty sure she shouldn't have said that, especially as the silence lengthened and Amelia didn't say anything. Amelia's face gradually hardened, but Mary Susan didn't notice that. Then there was only the sound of Amelia's bedside clock ticking, as Mary Susan wondered what she should be saying, or doing, and Amelia continued to cry silently into her handkerchief. After a time, the tears were gone, and Amelia turned to Mary Susan and rather formally asked her to please go downstairs and tell the others that Amelia was indisposed, and would not be down for breakfast. She, Amelia, would remain in her room until she looked presentable, and besides, she had some thinking to do.

Mary Susan left to do that, understanding that once more Amelia wanted to be left alone.

After breakfast everyone left for their day's classes and Amelia must have slipped out sometime during the morning, for she was not there when Mary Susan checked her room later on that morning. She didn't go inside, Amelia's room, she never entered her tenants'

bedrooms without notice, but she did pause outside the door and listen. After a time, she knocked softly, then called out Amelia's name, but there was no response.

## CHAPTER SIX LONG WALKS

The next afternoon, Constance Claire caught up with Amelia as she was making her way across the campus towards Begley House and dinner. Constance Claire asked her how she was, and noted that she had been very quiet at breakfast. She even offered to listen to her if she had anything to say.

Amelia walked another twenty feet in silence, then rather abruptly stopped and turned to face Constance Claire.

“There is so much evil in this world.” she said, in a heavy, low voice. Just that, then waited, staring at Constance Claire.

Constance Claire had no idea what to say to that. “Well, yes, of course you’re right. But the whole world isn’t evil, do you think?”

“There will be much suffering, and much blood. Darkness and blood. Too much blood.”

Constance Claire stared at Amelia. Her eyes were round with amazement and some fear. She looked around quickly to see how alone they really were. Amelia looked quite fierce, with hooded eyes that were looking directly at her. Her blue eyes were windows to endless cold and empty vistas and Constance Claire could not see past them. She had hoped for material for a possible story about the German-American girl who had spent a year in Post-War Germany, not to be frightened by a slip of a girl who might actually be quite mad.

“Oh I hope not. I can’t stand the sight of blood,” she twitted cheerfully, she hoped. “Let’s go. We don’t want to be late for diner.”

And she hurried off, not waiting for Amelia, who continued her slow, deliberate walk towards Begley House.

At tea, after diner, three days later, Louis and Constance Claire declared that they had work to do in the library and would be back from there no later than 11:15. The library stayed open until 11 and that gave them time to walk back.

Louis actually did have business at the library. For Constance Claire it was make-work so she could walk and talk to Louis. She wasn’t in love with Louis, but she had to discuss Amelia with someone, and he was the most likely to pay attention to her. Amelia was acting very very strangely these days. She had gone from being depressed to being absolutely morose, from monosyllabic to being completely silent. She ate practically nothing, and left as soon as politely possible after breakfast or class saying the absolute minimum of words necessary for leave-taking.

Diner was a repeat performance, and although she did attend tea, she just sat and watched everyone, never speaking. Her pale face was completely blank. The others, even Constance Claire soon learned to ignore her.

A very short while after Louis and Constance Claire had left the parlor for their trip to the library, Amelia got up to leave also, but this time she did not go up to her room. She went into the cloak room and emerged in a large dark grey cape with a hood. She walked directly

to Mary Susan and told her she was going for a walk, and could be expected back shortly before 11:15. Without a word to any of the others, she left, pulling the hood over her head as she went through the door.

The sky was cloudy and misty. It had rained earlier and promised to rain again soon. She did not take the route across the campus towards the library, but turned right and made her way down the sidewalk into the darkness. She walked almost all the way around the campus on the sidewalks bordering the campus, then turned around and walked the other direction back to the boarding house. This took almost two hours at the pace she was going. She did not seem to have anywhere to go, and once stopped at a bench for a quarter of an hour, just staring into the foggy darkness. When the college clock tower chimed the half hour, she started back at the same slow pace she had taken getting to the bench.

Her return was not unobserved. Louis and Constance Claire were under a tree whispering quietly as Amelia glided slowly towards the front door. In her long cape and hood she looked like a medieval executioner on her way to work.

“Here she comes,” Constance Claire whispered. “Louis, there is something very strange about our little Amelia. She may be quite mad, you know, and not in a good way. She quite frightened me the other day when I tried to speak to her when we met walking back to Begley House for lunch.”

The two waited soundlessly for Amelia enter Begley House and go upstairs to her bedroom. Amelia’s light went on. She appeared at the window, and seemed to be looking out at the darkness for a long time. Then she pulled the curtain closed and disappeared from their view.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### VAMPIRE

The second day after Amelia's very unusual night walk, she came down to breakfast even quieter and more morose than usual. She seemed very tired.

Constance Claire attempted conversation with Amelia, commenting on how fatigued she seemed to be. She was assured that Amelia was fine, and that she was just in a very serious phase with her studies. Philosophy, don't you know? Often not a terribly uplifting subject, especially the modern ones. Constance Claire did not believe that for one single second, but couldn't pry out anything more. It was like trying to question the sphinx. Mary Susan Begley was even more suspicious. She not only didn't believe the excuse, she wasn't even sure she was supposed to believe the excuse offered. She thought of having another little talk with Amelia, but, on a hunch, decided not to.

That evening, Amelia seemed a little better. She even spoke once or twice. She did not go upstairs until almost 9:00 pm, when all the others did. No sooner did the lights go out downstairs than she went back down the stairs wearing the large cape and hood she had worn the previous night and slipped quietly out the door into the rainy night.

Constance Claire heard something in the hallway outside of her bedroom door, and on intuition alone, looked down from her bedroom window onto the sidewalk below. She saw the hooded figure walking in the same direction it had taken the earlier night. It was a cold night, and a misty rain was falling, but the figure ignored it and soon disappeared into the gloom.

Constance Claire ran to her door and crossed to room 4, across the landing. She knocked furiously and called out Louis' name.

"Louis, come out. Something is happening."

The door opened and Louis said, "What now?" "Amelia has left, Louis. I saw her out the window. She is walking, just like she walked the other night."

"Conny, I don't see why it's important. Maybe she just wants some exercise and fresh air."

"In the middle of the night? In the rain? And where does she go?"

So they both got their rain coats and hats on and went outside. Amelia had disappeared by that time, and all they could do was wait for her return. She returned as before, in about an hour, still walking slowly and decidedly towards the front door. She opened it quietly, and went quietly up the stairs. As before, the two watchers saw Amelia's light go on, saw her go to the window, look around, then stare out into the darkness for a long time, then pull the curtain closed. Louis and Constance Claire returned to their respective rooms, moving very quietly so as not to be noticed by Mary Susan Begley or Amelia.

Mary Susan Begley did notice, however. She was completely aware of the comings and goings of her guests. She wondered what they could all be doing, but until she locked up at 11:15, they were perfectly free to come and go as they pleased. After that, only John Watson,

who had a key because he was often minding experiments in his laboratory until very late at night, could come in without ringing the doorbell.

One morning soon after, Amelia did not come down for breakfast at all, and Mary Susan had had enough of the melancholia. She went upstairs to Amelia's room and knocked on the door. At first there was no reply, but after a second knock a soft voice asked her to please wait just a minute. It was more like three or four minutes, but the door eventually opened to show an Amelia wearing a dressing gown and obviously having just gotten out of bed.

"What time is it," Amelia asked groggily.

"Almost 8:30. You've missed breakfast," Mary Susan said somewhat coldly.

"Oh dear. I must have overslept. I just have time to get ready for class. I feel so sleepy. Thank you so much for waking me," she added dismissively.

Mary Susan asked in a perfunctory way if she could be of any assistance but feeling dismissed, left. The next morning was not much better. Amelia did make it to breakfast, but ate very little. She seemed very sleepy, and Constance Claire wondered in a stage whisper what she did all night. The others were also concerned, especially Robert. Robert asked her if she stayed up very late studying, but Amelia assured everyone that she was going to bed, and not staying up late, and really didn't know what was affecting her this way.

Then there was the evening after diner when Amelia told Constance Claire that she had had a very strange dream. She dreamed that some man was looking at her through the window of her room. It had to be a dream, she said, since her room was on the second floor, but it seemed real at the time.

The next day, Constance Claire caught up with Louis after class and they ate their sandwiches together in the Student Commons.

"Louis, we should be doing something about Amelia." Constance Claire said. "She is very much in trouble, and it may already be too late."

"And what do you propose?" Louis went along, ever conversational. Constance Claire was a great joy to Louis. With her, there was never a dull moment.

"You know how she was at breakfast this morning. The poor girl was only just conscious at all. She looked like she had been up all night. In fact, she did go out after 11:00 last night. I heard her door open and close." Constance Claire paused, wondering if she dare go further. "In fact, I followed her." There, she had said it. She felt slightly guilty for spying on Amelia, but some things just had to be done.

"Ok, I'll bite. Where did she go?"

"She walked all over the campus, in the fog. Sometimes it seemed to me that she was humming something I couldn't quite make out."

"I admit that's passingly strange. I will point out, however, that you also were wandering all over the campus in the fog, although you might not have been humming. Were you?"

"Was I what?"

"Humming."

"Oh, be serious Louis. This is important. Her life may be at stake."

“I never realized that wandering in the fog could lead to such disastrous conclusions. Are you sure?”

Constance Claire looked directly at Louis very seriously. “Louis, Amelia is being preyed upon by some mysterious force that we can not see, or know anything about, but that is making her weak, and it will only get worse until she dies, or something much worse.”

“What could be worse than dying, Connie?”

“Louis, have you ever read anything about vampires?”

Amelia’s behavior became even more bizarre as the days passed. She staggered, barely conscious, to breakfast, when she made it at all. The others wondered what was happening to her. Her dreams, as reported by Constance Claire, were all of devils and blood.

Constance Claire went into action. She and Louis met at midday outside Begley house.

Constance Claire’s interpretation to Louis of the dreams Amelia had told her about were that they were based on something she had actually seen. According to Constance Claire, Amelia had actually seen a face at the window, but had convinced herself that she was dreaming it. She, Amelia, could not see how the face could be real because her room was on the second floor, but she, Constance Claire, could easily suppose a ladder, and that was what she and Louis were now looking for.

The ladder was easy enough to find. There was one quite suitable for the purpose in the shed. But when they looked in the soft earth of the garden below Amelia’s window they found no marks where the ladder must have stood.

Now Constance Claire is not the sort of person to just leave things up in the air like that, so to speak, and she speculated at some length about how one could climb a ladder without leaving marks, or reach the window without a ladder, and, reaching no solid conclusion that matched the facts, came to the only obvious solution possible: A vampire was visiting Amelia. He was flying through the window, or dematerializing on one side of the window and rematerializing on the other side, or whatever vampires did in those circumstances.

It closely matched all the facts. Amelia was always tired and sick-feeling in the mornings, she was pale as a ghost, she was having wild and terrible dreams. It couldn’t be anything else! Louis wasn’t quite so sure of that. It seemed to him that Amelia had always been pale, and very weak looking if not actually sick looking. But he did remember seeing red marks on her neck one morning. They didn’t really look much like blood as he remembered them, but he supposed they could have been.

That was enough to convince Constance Claire although it might not have convinced anyone else. It did explain everything, but what was to be done about it? How could anyone help Amelia? Was it already too late? Was Amelia going to have to have the stake in the heart routine? “How gruesome,” she thought deliciously.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### DENOUEMENT

It was all over the next night. This time Amelia woke up instantly when the window slid quietly up. She waited until she heard quiet footsteps to turn on the light on the bedside table.

“Haven’t you found them yet, Robert?” she asked softly in the deathly silence that followed the click of the lamp switch and the sudden flooding of the room with light.

“No. I mean, what do you mean?” Robert stammered. “I’m not looking for anything.” It was indeed Mr. Robert Miller, standing there in the middle of Amelia’s bedroom, looking just as shocked as anyone could look.

In a slow, quiet, and deadly voice Amelia pointed out to Robert that he was in her room, that it was very late at night, and that she knew that he had been there before. He was obviously searching for something. She also told him that she knew that she was supposed to be in a deep, drugged, sleep. She actually had been the first time or two, but had caught on to what was happening, and stopped taking sugar in her bedtime tea. That had made her feel ever so much better in the morning, by the way. But now, once more, what did Robert want in her room?

“Perhaps we had better talk. May I sit down?”

Receiving a slight nod, he sat in the occasional chair facing the bed. Amelia had propped herself further up on the headboard and arranged her pillow, but had not otherwise moved. Robert continued.

“I should probably have told you a few things earlier,” he said smoothly, “but I wanted to keep you out of it if I could. I’ve grown very fond of you, as you’ve noticed, and didn’t want you to get hurt.”

It seems that Robert was a member of the Bolshevik movement, led by Lenin in the new Soviet Union, and he had been sent here from the East Coast to find Amelia, find out what she knew, destroy all evidence of her connections to Mr. Klaus Huberman, a Socialist, formerly of Berlin, and then liquidate her. This was to be done to prevent any warning of the upcoming worker’s revolution in America.

It had been easy to find Amelia, and his forged credentials had easily placed him in the University as a Senior in Political Science. Finding a room in the very building Amelia lived in had been an unforeseen piece of luck, which he had exploited to its fullest.

“So if I can find the evidence I am looking for, I plan to let you go free afterwards.” Robert continued.

Amelia supposed she was supposed to react with questions about what he was talking about, letting her go, and freedom. But as she knew the answers, and was heartily tired of her actress role, she said nothing.

“The Movement I belong to, the Movement we both belong to, is planning great things in this country, as it has done in Russia and Germany. I am part of the great plan for the USA. But my masters are afraid that you know things you should not know, things that you learned

from the traitor Huberman during your illicit love affair with him in Berlin last year. I was sent to find out what you know, and to remove you if I found it necessary. Happily, I do not think it will be necessary. I have only one problem remaining.”

“What is that, Robert, your one problem that’s keeping you from overthrowing the United States government?” Amelia questioned sardonically.

Robert stiffened at the insult. “You mock our efforts, but you do not know our power. We will not fail in this. But my problem is that although I have seen everything that was written to you, I can not decipher it. I can not read the lies the traitor Huberman may have written to you. He has written them in a foreign language, to disguise his words from me. I have decided that once you decipher all of his letters for me in English, I can allow you to resume your quiet university life with no further interference. Do you agree?”

“Are you really that far removed from reality? The Bolsheviks I met in Germany didn’t sound nearly as cute as you do, with your fake Communist blather. Why would I want to further confuse you with what Klaus has written to me. Am I supposed to lead the counter-revolution?”

“Then you admit that you can read the letters! Read them to me.”

In the same slow, deadly voice she had been using all along, Amelia replied, “Of course I can read the letters Klaus sent to me. The foreign language, as you prefer to call it, is German. But Why would I want to do that?” Incredibly, Amelia had the smallest of smiles just at the corners of her mouth.

“I very much fear, Amelia, that you will have to, to save your life. If you have not been informed of the details of our plan, if there are no such details in the love letters the traitor Huberman wrote to you, then you will only be held until the revolution begins. Otherwise, then I’m afraid I will have no choice but to remove you permanently, from this earth. I will do that very reluctantly, but if I must do it, I will.”

“But we are brothers and sisters in the same movement, you said. Does your movement murder it’s own people?” Amelia knew the answer to that one too, but she thought she ought to ask anyway, just to hear some more of the official line that Robert was so skilled at. It would be a shame to let all that training go to waste.

“The traitors and the weak must die, so that the strong and truly dedicated can lead. There will always be sacrifices.”

“In that case, being essentially a weakling and a traitor, I will read the letters to you.” She took the risk that he really was so wrapped up in his own insanity that he could be fooled, for just a minute or two, and that would be enough. One last part to play. She got up from the bed, in her nightgown, making no attempt to put on her dressing gown. He probably wouldn’t notice, the jackass, but she needed any possible distraction. She walked to the chest of drawers, keeping an eye on Robert as she opened the drawer. Sure enough, he was not looking at her hands. She took something from the drawer, held it close to her body, and turned around.

Robert spent a long moment taking the new scene in. The object in the frail Amelia’s

hands was a Civil War 44 caliber cavalry revolver with a long barrel. At this distance, it must have looked huge to him.

Robert smiled at her knowingly, “You aren’t going to shoot me with that antique. You know you aren’t. We belong to the same cause, you and I. We could be lovers, you and I. Just read me the letters, and I will let you go free.”

Amelia spoke very quietly and very deliberately. “I loved Klaus. Your kind killed him. Your kind don’t understand love. I don’t think I have time to explain it to you. What was in the sugar bowl?”

“Veranol, mixed in with the sugar. I didn’t want to kill you, I tried to get the letters from you without that, but I have to follow orders. We all must follow orders, or we’ll never succeed.” As he said this, he turned very slowly to the right and seemed to be reaching behind him for something.

“You murdered Klaus, and you were just following orders! All right, you follow yours and I follow mine,” she said. She slowly raised Mary Susan Begley’s pappy’s revolver in both hands, aimed it directly at the middle of her would be lover’s chest, squeezed her eyes tightly shut and pulled the trigger. The explosion was deafening.

Constance Claire was the first to reach the room. The first thing she noticed was that the room was full of smoke. Then she saw Amelia standing beside her bed in her nightgown still holding the smoking pistol in both hands. When Constance Claire turned in the direction the pistol was pointing she did a very unprofessional thing for a young journalist, she fainted dead away. The bullet had torn off the top half of Robert’s head and brains and blood were splattered in a roundish pattern on the far wall.

Louis was the next to arrive, then the others, followed last by Mary Susan Begley. She gently took the pistol from Amelia and led her downstairs to the parlor. Louis called the police from the phone in the hall.

The police arrived about 3:30 am. Their investigations took an hour and a half. The detectives determined that Amelia had shot Robert Miller with the pistol offered to them by Mary Susan Begley. They further determined that the shooting was in self defense, Robert having entered Amelia’s room through the window at about 3:00 am, himself armed also with a pistol, with unknown but obviously criminal intent, possibly simple theft, but more likely attempted rape. They found the rope ladder Robert used to climb down from his room directly above hers. Amelia was not taken into custody, but was required to remain available for further investigation. They then left, taking Robert’s body and the pistol. They promised to return the pistol to Mary Susan Begley once the investigation was completed.

Once the police had left, Mary Susan Begley and the housekeeper Sally moved all of Amelia’s things to the vacant room on the third floor. Everyone drifted away over the next hour or two to go to bed.

The police returned the next morning for another round of questions. It seems that there was some difficulty positively identifying the corpse. The police couldn’t seem to locate any of his family. Mary Susan helped all she could from the application forms Robert had filled

out when he contracted with Begley House for the term, but he was his own means of support, was over 21 and therefore did not need any parental consent. Later on, the police called Mary Susan on the telephone to ask again for the names of Robert's parents as listed on his application form. It seems that they, too, could not be located. Everyone agreed that Mr. Miller was turning out to be a rather mysterious fellow.

Amelia appeared for diner the next day and seemed to be in somewhat better spirits than would have been expected. Although everyone was simply dying to get at all the gory details, Mary Susan implored them not to discuss it until after diner.

## CHAPTER NINE

### AFTERMATH

Everyone gathered in the parlor immediately after diner and began telling one another what had happened the night before. Robert had been searching Amelia's room, for what they did not know, but often, and always while she was asleep. Yes, he had come in through the window, but he had not used a ladder, therefore no marks in the garden. He let the rope ladder out of his window on the third floor directly above Amelia's, climbed down, opened Amelia's window, entered her room and searched.

He had done this repeatedly, looking first for anything from Klaus, then for anything at all written in English. He grew more and more frustrated at the seemingly endless collection of handwritten and printed German. He knew no one who would translate them for him, without word of it getting to Amelia immediately. The number of German speakers in Brown's Creek is very limited outside of the university, and they all knew each other.

Amelia was shaken, but very calm. It was as though the worst was over, and recovery was already beginning.

"We thought you were turning into a vampire," Constance Claire said very quietly, blushing furiously. "Didn't we, Louis," Constance Claire turned her face to Louis, hoping for some support.

"Well, you certainly did." Louis replied. "I had some doubts, but there surely were some strange things going on. I heard some noises coming from Amelia's room very late at night. I never wanted to ask, but I was willing to go along with you in your investigations."

Constance Claire listed all of the events she had carefully noted.

- You haven't been eating anything for breakfast.
- You haven't felt well and looked even more pale than usual every morning.
- You walked in your sleep the other night. We tried to follow you, but you turned into a bat in the fog. John Watson walked right by you without seeing you, just seconds before.
- Your window was opened during the night, after everyone else went to bed. John noticed that when walked back to the laboratory for his late-night research.

John added, "It was just experiments that had to be attended to and checked at timed intervals. I had to observe things and do a log entry every four hours for a week. I was watching bacteria grow."

"I must confess." Amelia said to Constance Claire, "I allowed you to think that. Once I guessed what you thought, I played along. Sometimes, to give Robert more opportunity to

search my room, without my being in it, I took long walks after everyone had gone to bed, wandering on foggy nights through the University campus. I have no idea how I turned into a bat.”

“How did you know not to take sugar in your late-night tea? How did you figure out about the Veronal?”

“John told me what was in the sugar. On one of the evening walks I took a sample of the sugar to him in his laboratory. He analyzed it and told me what it was. Once John told me about the Veronal, I was only pretending to be groggy at breakfast, so Robert would believe that I had been asleep. I was afraid if Robert found out his knock-out powder wasn’t working, he would just kill me and give up on the search. I wondered why he kept searching over and over. Now I realize it was because he couldn’t read anything he found. How funny!”

“One time I even put red marks from my fountain pen on my neck before I came down to breakfast. It was the only pleasantry in this whole business. I became very tired of acting dopy after a while.”

“But how did the Veronal get into your sugar bowl?”

“Do you remember the night Robert and I came home from our first, and may I add, last, date, so very late, and I was drunk? Well I wasn’t quite as drunk as I was supposed to be, and when I passed out on the bed Robert very solicitously took off my shoes and stockings, unbuttoned a few buttons, and tucked me in, all safe and sound. He must have put the Veronal into the sugar bowl after that, because I really was asleep, and didn’t see him do it.”

“Robert asked me out for the sole purpose of getting me drunk at a speak and then taking me home and drugging my sugar bowl. It was the only way he could think of to get into my room. Begley House is so busy he never could get into my room while I was gone.”

“I suspected him immediately of being the man I was looking for. Who would get a girl drunk so he could spend hours extolling the virtues of Lenin? Besides, I had Klaus’ letter. I knew someone was after me.”

“Where did you get the pistol?” Louis the Lawyer wanted to know.

“It will, in time, turn out to belong to Mrs. Mary Susan Begley. I complained of roaches in my room one time and she loaned it to me.” Finally, Amelia was enjoying this.

Mary Susan Begley smiled a little bit from her corner seat, but did not speak.

Constance Claire said, “I can’t believe you could actually kill Robert. It must have been really horrifying for you. Did you really feel that desperate?” Constance Claire was back in her hoped-for interviewing mode.

Amelia was about to answer when Mary Susan cleared her throat slightly and said quite firmly, “She was afraid for her life, and she only did what it is sometimes necessary for a woman to do to protect herself. Women must sometimes be prepared to do that, where men are concerned, and fortunately, most women are.”

That almost, but not quite, answered the question. Amelia said in the same cold, deadly voice she had used on Robert, “The Bolsheviks killed Klaus. Robert was one of them. He would have killed me just as surely as they killed Klaus.”

No one seemed to want to pursue that line of conversation, and there was a pause, after which Louis asked, “And what, exactly, unless it’s a secret, was in the fateful letters from Klaus?”

“Nothing whatever,” Amelia said, “I mean, they were love letters, pure and simple. Klaus was a good and brave man. He wouldn’t even think of bringing me into anything dangerous that he was involved in. His warning to me was based on what the Bolsheviks would think I knew, not what I really knew. And Robert would never have been allowed to let me live. I know that kind of thinking. It’s ruthless and absolutely inhuman. The fact is, had I not shot him first, he would most assuredly have killed me.”

“You are very lucky in any case,” John added, “if he had not mixed the Veronal in with the sugar, and you had somehow gotten most of the Veronal in a single dose, it would very likely have killed you. In that event it would have been the pathologist who would have detected the Veronal rather than I. Why didn’t you want me to help? I could have done more than simply detect the Veronal. Why didn’t you call in the police?”

“I’m sorry to have left you out, John, but really, I didn’t want help. The instant you told me there was Veronal in the sugar, I knew what I had to do. And I wanted to do it alone. I don’t think anyone in America really understands what kind of thinking and acting is going on nowadays in Europe, and especially Germany. And they don’t and probably never will understand the absolute dedication to an ideal, no matter how insane, the Bolsheviks have.”

Again, Mary Susan Begley interrupted. “You did exactly what you had to do. You defended both your honor and your very life. You couldn’t accuse anyone in particular right then of poisoning your sugar bowl. You would have been laughed at, if not prosecuted for slander.”

And sure enough, in the days that followed, neither the police nor the prosecuting attorney showed any sign of wanting to prosecute Amelia or even further trouble her. It might have been that Mary Susan Begley put in a quiet word to someone, that was never known. It might just as well have been that there were unable to find any past at all for Robert Miller. Amelia remained on the third floor temporarily while her room was thoroughly cleaned and repapered, but she had moved back in to her former room by Christmas. She became something of a heroine, at least to the inhabitants of Begley House, although a very quiet one. She seldom spoke of those events, concentrating instead on her studies.

—END—