

Forget Not

by Maddog

The night was clear and cold. It was such a clean, sparkling evening that Toronto appeared as it did on postcards, a conglomeration of bright lights on the edge of a dark lake. Detective Don Schanke blew on his numb left fingers and then stuffed them back in his brown suit pants. When he'd left the station, some eight hours ago, it had been warm enough to go out without an overcoat. Now he was freezing. Turning up the slightly worn collar of his blue blazer, he glared at his partner. Where Schanke's hair was dark and thinning, Knight's was thick and blond. Nicholas Knight appeared to be several years younger and pounds lighter than his partner. In contrast to Schanke's cheap suit, he was dressed in pleated black pants, a white, high-collared shirt and black leather jacket. It was the leather jacket that caught Schanke's attention. It was lined and looked wonderfully warm. He wondered if he could borrow it since his partner had left it unzipped, apparently oblivious to the cold.

"So what have we got?" Knight asked, startling his friend out of his reverie.

"A matchbook." Handing the small clue over, Schanke gratefully stuffed his other hand in his pocket.

"Ah," Nick turned the book around to read the embossed writing; McDonough's Motor Lodge. "Shall we go check it out?"

"Sure, just turn the heat on high, okay?"

"Why, you cold?" Nick grinned for a second at the dirty look that was shot him. He and Schanke had spent the last three hours tracking down a murder suspect. An informant had given Schanke a tip that had eventually led them to an abandoned car where the suspect's wallet had been found. Besides the matchbook, there were no other clues to the alleged killer's whereabouts. The pair of detectives got into Nick's '62 Cadillac and turned out of the parking lot.

Schanke stretched his hands out gratefully to the heating vent. "Man, I sure could go for a warm cup of coffee."

"Do you want to stop?"

"Nah, I'd rather check out this lead and call it a night."

"You don't think that Summers will be there?" Nick inquired. Scott Summers was the name of the alleged perpetrator they were tracking down. He had done time once for manslaughter and was a suspect in several unsolved murders in Toronto. It was an unfortunate case of too much suspicion and not enough hard evidence. Summers had been spotted near a bar where the owner had been killed while closing up for the night. A gun had been found not far from the scene; ballistics was checking to see if it was the weapon that had killed the man.

"Probably long gone, partner."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Gut instinct. When you've been a detective as long as I have, you get a gut feeling about these things."

"Well, you've certainly got a gut," Nick chided his friend.

"Hah, hah, very funny. If you're such a comedian, Knight, why don't you go to Vegas? Hey, there's the motel, and isn't it a fine looking establishment." Schanke pointed to a set of run down buildings that were lit by a red neon sign with letters missing.

Nick pulled the Caddy into a dark spot not far from the dilapidated sign that said "Lobby."

The pair entered the room and were instantly assaulted by a highly unpleasant odor. Gagging slightly, Schanke held back a step and let his partner take the lead. Nick flipped out his Toronto police badge and introduced them. "I need to know if this man," he held out Summers' picture, "is registered at this hotel."

"Gotta warrant?" snapped the manager, a fortyish blonde wearing too much pancake makeup.

"We're just trying to locate him, ma'am," Nick replied pleasantly.

"Why?" retorted the manager, not willing to give an inch.

While Nick argued with the motel's manager, an uncooperative blonde if he'd ever seen one, Schanke stepped back outside. The woman was obviously in need of a bath. And those pink stretch pants! Hadn't they been outlawed years ago? Taking a deep breath of the cold night air, he spotted a little girl, kicking a soccer ball by a red Ford Escort. She looked to be about his daughter Jenny's age. Schanke smiled slightly. He liked children and this one should be told that playing in between cars in a parking lot was simply not safe. He ambled over to the girl.

"Hey sweetheart, what's your name?" Schanke knelt down so that he was closer to the little girl's height. The girl took a few steps away from the car toward him.

"Marjie," she responded, smiling at him. "What's yours?"

"My name's Detective Schanke."

"Schanke?" Marjie wrinkled her nose. "That's a weird name."

"Weird? I'll have you know that Schanke is a great name!" he protested, trying to fix a look of deep hurt on his face.

"Yeah, well, it sounds weird to me," the girl informed him gravely, bouncing the soccer ball off her knee.

"Hey, you're pretty good with that. You play on a team?"

"Yeah, they've got teams that play over in the park. I," she stated proudly, "am first string."

"That's great. But you know, sweetheart, it's not safe to play in between these cars. Somebody could pull out and not see you. You don't want to get hit, do you?"

"No, guess not. But where can I practice? There's a game tomorrow."

"Hmm, let me look." Schanke stood up and looked around the parking lot for a safer place for the child to play. There was an area of the lot that was partially blocked off with concrete barriers, probably put there to prevent people from parking in front of the fire hydrant. He turned back to Marjie, his outstretched arm pointing. "That looks better to ..."

He never got a chance to finish his sentence. The Escort exploded, the red hot blast catching Marjie and Schanke, throwing them both effortlessly back toward the motel's lobby.

"Schanke," Nick yelled as soon as he heard the first rumblings of the detonation. Running out into the parking lot, he was temporarily blinded by the fire. His vampire-enhanced vision quickly adjusted and he ran to his friend, who was lying unmoving on his back on the concrete. "Call an ambulance!" he yelled

out to the motel manager, who had followed him out. The woman nodded and ducked back inside. Kneeling down by his partner, he was horrified to see that Schanke was totally covered in blood. Reaching out, he fumbled for a pulse and was relieved to find a strong one. Glancing around he sighted another body, this one much smaller and just as unmoving. Leaving his friend's side, he moved closer to it to get a better look, then recoiled. The huge pool of fresh blood surrounding the small body was stirring up his unnatural appetite. There was no use trying to find the child's pulse. There wasn't enough of her left to have one.

Cursing inwardly, he went back to his partner, who was starting to stir. "Schanke, don't move," Nick cautioned, putting a hand lightly on the injured man's chest.

"Have ta ..." Schanke mumbled through swelling lips, increasing his efforts to sit up.

"You don't have to do anything but lay there and wait for the ambulance. Now stay still."

"The kid, gotta, you gotta help the kid."

Knight heard a faint, approaching ambulance siren. "All right, Schank. I'll go and check, but you," he ordered, "have got to stay quiet."

"Fine, jus' go."

Nick removed his hand from Schanke's bloodied chest. He noticed the blood had seeped underneath his fingernails as he stood up and walked over to the wreckage. Taking a deep breath, he removed his jacket and gently placed it over the little girl's body. It was the only thing he could think of to do to help.

Nick shifted uncomfortably in the hard plastic chair and looked at his watch. It was less than two hours until sunrise. There had been no word on Schanke's condition in over an hour. He was in emergency surgery to remove a sliver of metal that had lodged itself uncomfortably near his left eye. Luckily, for his partner anyway, the girl had taken the brunt of the blast. The detective's injuries were minor and caused by flying debris. Marjie Winters had been dead at the scene, killed instantly by the explosion.

"Nick?" a woman's voice broke his reverie. "How is he?"

Knight stood up and enveloped Natalie Lambert in a protective hug, her head, with its curly reddish-brown hair, buried against his chest. "He's going to be just fine, Nat."

"I got here as soon as I could. I was in the middle of an autopsy when Stonetree called," Natalie explained. She was a medical examiner with the Toronto coroner's office. "Has his doctor been here yet?"

"Not for a while, nobody has said anything for the last hour. Has Stonetree managed to reach Myra yet?"

"Yeah, he managed to reach her at her sister's," Dr. Lambert replied. Myra was Schanke's wife. "Captain Stonetree said she was taking it pretty well. She'll be here in a few hours."

Nick nodded in response and then returned to the chair, hunching slightly forward. "It's a miracle, you know."

As if sensing her friend's distress, Natalie sat in the chair beside him and put her arm around his shoulder. Nick continued talking, "If he had been any closer to that car he would have been killed along with that little girl."

"Not his day to die, I guess."

"No, not today," Nick responded, his frown deepening as he thought about the short span of time that was allotted to mortals.

"Do you think the bomb has something to do with the case you were on?" Nat prompted, changing the subject to more neutral ground, and giving Knight's shoulder a squeeze before removing her arm.

"It could be. We won't know for sure until we find out if Summers was actually at the motel or not."

"Detective Knight?" a crisp woman's voice called out down the corridor. It was Schanke's surgeon, Dr. Nathan.

"Yes, Doctor."

Walking over to the seated couple, Dr. Nathan proceeded to explain that the detective was resting peacefully and that everything was fine. They would have to watch the wound closely for infection, but it seemed fairly certain that Schanke would not have his sight impaired permanently.

"Can we see him?" Natalie asked.

"Only for a moment," the doctor cautioned, "He's still groggy from the anesthesia and needs his rest."

Nick and Nat walked down the quiet halls of the hospital to the room where their friend had been moved to. Schanke was dozing in the hospital bed, eyes bandaged, with a face nearly as white as the sheets upon which he lay.

"Schanke?" Nick called out softly as he approached the bed.

"Tha' you, Knight?" came the slurred reply.

"Yeah, it's me, partner. How you doing?"

"kay, I guess. Feel really out of it."

"Hi, Schanke," greeted Natalie as she took a hold of Don's hand. "You're doing just fine."

"How'd you know, Lambert? Everybody you work on is already dead," Schanke managed to mumble out.

"Well, if you can insult Nat, you can't be in that bad shape." Nick snorted, relief warming his body. "Myra will be here in a few hours. Until then, you keep out of trouble, you hear?" He laid a hand on his friend's shoulder briefly as Natalie said goodbye for both of them, promising that they'd be by tomorrow for a visit.

"All righ'," Schanke acknowledged as he drifted off back to sleep.

“Hey Knight, how's that partner of yours doing?" Captain Stonetree's gravelly voice called out across the room. He was a large man, with a friendly, rubbery sort of face; friendly, at least, when he wasn't bellowing.

"He's doing better, Captain. Myra says he was flirting with the nurses when she came in. That's always a good sign."

"It'd be a better sign if he was trying to suck a souvlaki through his IV," Stonetree responded, facial expression never varying for a moment. "But that's good news. I'll try to visit him tomorrow, been trying to contain this mess."

"I'll get right on the lead we had for Summers," Knight assured him.

"No, you won't."

"I still think the bombing had something to do with Summers. I know its just a hunch, but ..."

"It's a good hunch, that's not the problem," Stonetree answered. "I'm taking you off the case."

"I know Schanke won't be back for a while but I think I can handle the case alone."

"Didn't say you couldn't, but I want Billy and Jenny to handle it. Xavier and Munroe have experience with bombers."

"Maybe I haven't had much experience, but this case means a lot to me," declared Nick, a determined look starting to form on his face.

"I know and I understand, believe me. But part of the reason I'm taking you off this case is because you're emotionally involved with it."

"And the other reason?"

"Billy and Jenny are already working on another bombing that fits the same M.O. Makes sense to give them this one, too."

"All right," Nick nodded, keeping his voice calm, "I can see your point, but what if the bombing isn't related to the Summer's case? Someone needs to find him."

"Thought you just said you thought the bombing was related to the Summers' case?" Stonetree retorted.

"I said it was a hunch. What if I'm wrong? There are still some leads to follow up."

"Thought all you had was a matchbook?"

"Well, yes, but ..." Nick trailed off. Stonetree was right, the Summers' case dead-ended at the motel. The only potential source of new information was the bombing, and that only if it was related.

"But nothing. Look, Nick, I've had a partner hurt, too. Would've done anything to find the people responsible."

"Then let me follow up on the bombing."

"Let me finish, being emotionally involved in the case isn't going to help. Let Xavier and Munroe handle it, they're already living and breathing bombings."

"I don't like it," Nick stated flatly.

"Never said you had to. There's lots of other work for you to do," Stonetree said and turned to lumber back to his office.

Nick sat at his desk, unhappy at the turn of events. Oh, he understood the Captain's point. But he still didn't like it.

He was staring at a red brick wall. He wasn't sure how long he'd been there but it seemed like quite a long time. A noise penetrated through to him. It was the sound of a ball being bounced on concrete. A loud ping accompanied each bounce. Turning from the wall he started toward the sound. It grew louder and louder as he got closer to its source. The bouncing sound was becoming less and less a ping, and more and more a bang. He found the source of the noise. A little girl was bouncing a white ball, only she wasn't bouncing it on concrete. She was bouncing it on top of some sort of liquid. The girl smiled at him, showing gaps in a grin where her teeth hadn't come in yet. She began bouncing the ball even harder so that it jumped up higher and higher. He smiled and walked toward her. Then he noticed that his feet were getting wet. Frowning he looked at them and reached down with his fingertips to touch them. The

liquid was warm and he brought it to his face for a better look. Then he noticed that his hands were covered in blood. Stumbling backward, he started to fall and then ...

"Don, Don, wake up!" Myra shook her husband. He had been mumbling and thrashing about in his sleep. She was afraid he was going to tear off the bandage that was still over his left eye. "You okay?" she asked as he sat up, trembling violently.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine," he reassured her. "Those painkillers just give me some weird dreams, that's all."

"Maybe you should call the doctor and get the prescription changed."

"Yeah, yeah, I'll do that tomorrow. Sorry I woke you."

"That's okay," she replied, laying back down, not fully going back to sleep until her husband's breathing had settled into the deep, slow rhythm of sleep.

"Hey, partner," Schanke declared as he plopped down at his desk. It was heaped over with accumulated mail and files.

"Hey, Schanke, welcome back," Nick grinned. It had been nearly three weeks since Schanke had been injured. This was the first time he had been back at the station, though Nick had visited him several times.

"Good to be back, one more day filled with watching television and my brain would have turned to mush."

"How could you have told the difference?" Knight chided. He held out a box, tied with a bright red ribbon.

"A gift, for *moi*?"

"Yes, thought you might like something special for your first day back."

"Thank you," the detective ripped the ribbon off the box and gazed happily at its contents. "A dozen jelly doughnuts!"

"And none of those apple-filled ones that you don't like."

"Perfect," came the reply, mumbled through a raspberry doughnut that was already gushing jelly.

"Glad you like them. Don't eat them all at once."

"You have to eat them quickly. They get stale fast," Schanke replied, picking up another doughnut, the first one already a fading memory.

"Good to see your injuries haven't affected your appetite," Nick said as he took a good look at his friend. Schanke was thinner and his eyes still had dark circles around them. Residual bruising? he wondered. "So what do you want to catch up on today?"

"Well, I want to catch up on the Summers' case, of course, but I've got an appointment with the Department's shrink."

"Thought you were cleared to return to duty?"

"I am, but she wanted one more visit with me. Bunch of bull hockey, I'm fine. Vision's back to normal, feeling fine, the old Schanke machine is 100%."

"It's probably just a formality, Schank."

"Yeah, but it's a pain. We'll catch up tomorrow," picking up his box of doughnuts, the dark-haired man crammed another one into his mouth. Waving to his partner he went off to keep his appointment.

“Hey, Don!" a voice called out to him urgently. "Look out, it's coming your way!"

Glancing around frantically around the field, Schanke spotted the ball a long way off, near the other team's goal. He started running in the direction of the goal as fast as he could. He looked down at his feet; they seemed to barely touch the ground. The other team's members seemed to be moving at half-speed as he charged at the ball. One of his teammates passed it to him and he easily managed to start it goalward. The goalie was short, barely taking up any of the expanse of the goal. He shot the ball hard to the lefthand side. The goalie reacted in slow motion as the ball came forward. The ball slowed down as well. Hurling sideways, the goalie bodily stopped the ball. The ball hit the defender's chest and exploded. The force of the blast knocked Schanke off his feet and he struggled to get up as the very ground seemed to pitch like a boat. Managing to finally get up, he lurched toward the goal. The explosion had left the ball untouched, only the goalie was laying in the reddened grass, eyes staring vacantly at him. Then the goalie started to move ...

“Don, honey, honey," Myra shook her husband. He was having another bad dream. "Don, wake up. Wake up, it's time for you to get to work."

"Wha?" Schanke sat up with a start and glanced anxiously around. It was only his bedroom that greeted his eyes. "Oh, uh, I'm up, I'm up," he assured his wife.

"You were having another bad dream, weren't you?" she accused.

"No, no I wasn't. Just really tired, that's all. You scared me when you woke me up."

"You were moaning long before I even got into the room."

"Well, maybe that's because I was dreaming of you, my little love muffin," he joked, trying to throw his wife off his case.

Myra would not be distracted. "You haven't been sleeping well for weeks. I want you to go see somebody, maybe the police psychologist could help."

"No," came her husband's firm reply. "No way. I'm fine Myra. Really, I just need some rest, that's all." Climbing out of bed the detective headed to the shower to get dressed. "Those shrinks don't help anybody anyway, they just cause people to start wondering if they've lost their nerve."

"I don't believe Nick would think that, Don. Why don't you ..."

"I said *no*," snapped Schanke, slamming the door of the bathroom.

Myra stared at the door for a moment and decided not to pursue an argument. She knew from long experience it wouldn't do any good right now. As soon as she heard the water of the shower turn on, she went over to the phone and started dialing. "Hello, Nick? It's Myra. Have you got a minute?"

Schanke bit into the grape jelly doughnut and cursed through a mouthful of it when some of the jelly oozed out of it onto the folder he was reading. "Are you telling me this is how far you got in the Summers' case while I was out?"

"I told you, Stonetree put somebody else on it right after you got hurt. He thought that I would be too emotionally involved. How'd you get the case file anyway?" Nick replied as he made a sharp left, swerving the car slightly to avoid a pothole.

"Picked it up off that mess Billy calls a desk. He and Jenny are working a stakeout tonight. They won't be needing it."

Deciding not to mention that it was definitely not standard procedure to take another detective's case file from the precinct, Nick thought about how to broach the subject that had been on his mind all evening. His partner had been edgy since he had returned from sick leave, but he had put that down to the injury and the manner in which it had happened. Myra was concerned, though. Don hadn't been sleeping well, had had bad dreams for weeks, and refused to go see anybody about the problem. The big problem was, how to broach the subject without Schanke getting ticked off at him? Glancing at the address given to them by an informant, Knight noticed that they were nearly at their intended destination. "Hey, Schank, we're just about there. Let's concentrate on the case we're supposed to be working on, okay?"

"Okay, but do you really think that this punk's gonna know anything about the Zinichka murders?"

Nick shrugged, the leather of his new jacket squeaking slightly. "He might. It's worth a shot. None of the other leads have panned out at all."

"Go figure, partner. Two members of the same family gunned down, miles apart, at nearly the exact same time. No witnesses, no apparent motives, no clues, *nada*. There's gotta be something, somewhere."

"You still think it was drug-related?"

Schanke brushed at the drying sugar ring around his mouth before answering, "Nah, the pieces just don't fit. Maybe you had the right idea, and it's some kind of domestic thing within the family. They sure seemed like an excitable bunch when we interviewed them."

"Yeah, I'd never had baklava thrown at me before," said Nick as he unconsciously rubbed at the still-sticky spot on his pants.

"All in the line of duty, pal,"

Happy to hear his partner making wisecracks, Nick relaxed at the wheel. He'd been tense all evening because his partner had been jumpy and edgy. The dark-haired detective had been at times withdrawn, at other times irritable. The fact that the police were no closer to finding who had planted the car bomb that had killed the little girl and injured Schanke, not to mention not finding Summers, had only made it worse. Maybe, he thought to himself, the Zinichka case would take Schank's mind off his troubles.

"There's the factory," Schanke called out, pointing toward a large, gray, dilapidated building. Nick pulled the Caddy into a gravel driveway and stopped close to the building. It took a second for Schanke to notice what Nick's vampire enhanced eyes had spotted instantly, a tall, gangly figure hiding near some barrels.

"And there's our informant," Nick commented as he stopped the car. The two detectives exited the car and walked carefully toward the informant. His appearance suggested he was in his late thirties but he could have been any age; drugs and alcohol had made him a shaking shell of a man. They put a few barrels between the street and themselves.

"You got the money?" the figure asked.

"Sure, we got your money. You got the info?" Schanke retorted.

"Yeah, yeah, sure."

"Let's have it then," prompted Nick, trying to stay upwind.

"Let's see it first," the informant said firmly, apparently afraid of getting burned and not getting his fix for the night. He stared greedily as the leather-jacketed detective produced an envelope with several large bills in it, fanning the bills to let the man see that the amount agreed upon was there. "Okay. Well, I heard you guys were looking for a murderer."

"Aren't we always?" Schanke responded, shaking his head a little. The addict didn't seem to get the joke and simply stared blankly at him. "Go on."

"Anyway, there was this guy, you know, he was at this party I was at. Well, it wasn't really a party, more like a, uh, like a get-together. Anyway, this guy was talking about this job he'd done. Job had paid really well. Sick dude though, he was happy that he'd blown this guy away, you know. Bad karma, all around, you know?"

"What'd he look like, this dude?" inquired Nick.

"Tall guy, muscular, thin, wore these really weird red sunglasses, even inside. Had a real attitude, you know."

"Where'd he say this really good job took place?" Schanke probed.

"Bar, bar off of Charles Street, forget the name, um ..."

Neither of the Zinichkas had been killed anywhere near Charles Street, so the junkie's information was going to be useless, Nick thought, but then he remembered another case. "Was it the Vic?"

"Yeah, that's right, the Vic! Do I get my money now?"

"You said this guy wore red sunglasses right?" Schanke prompted.

"Right, weird red sunglasses, couldn't figure out how he saw anything. Nasty dude."

"Was his name Summers?" Schanke questioned.

"Uh, not sure, heard somebody call him Scott. Can I get my money now?"

"Sure, just one more question. Do you know where this guy hangs out?" Nick asked.

"Nah, not for sure anyway, the people he was with though, they hang out near the docks."

"Here you go," Nick handed over the envelope. "And if you hear anything about or see that guy again you give us a call and there'll be another envelope."

"That works," the informant nodded sagely as he stumbled off into the dark, further back into the warehouse.

The two Toronto detectives headed back to Nick's car. They didn't start discussing what they'd heard until they had pulled out into the road.

"You know, we're not on the case, Schanke," offered the leather-jacketed vampire.

"We're not on the case, Schanke," parroted his partner, in a mocking sing-song voice. "Look, Knight, tracking down Summers means a lot to me."

"I know, partner. But we really should turn the stuff over to Billy and Jenny, it's their case, let them handle it."

"They couldn't handle a difficult case if it was gift-wrapped for 'em."

"You know that's not true, Schanke," Nick replied soothingly. "They're both good detectives and I'm sure ..."

Whatever Nick was going to say got cut short by the insistent blare of their radio. Schanke answered the call and was informed that there had been a suspected homicide west of them. Acknowledging the call, the two detectives headed for the crime scene, their dispute over the information about the Summers' case temporarily forgotten. The location the dispatcher had given them was only a few blocks away from where they had met the informant. It was a run-down house, junk heaped around the yard. There were two patrol cars out in front of the house, lights flashing against the peeling paint. Parking the car, the two men got out and headed over toward the officers.

"Hey, Neddie," Schanke called out to one, a red-headed woman who was deep in conversation with another policeman.

"Hey there, Schanke, good to have you back."

"Thanks, what's up?"

"Some neighbors heard some screaming about an hour ago. Guess it got bad enough that they decided it was worth calling us."

"That's a surprise, usually it's no hear, no see, no get involved."

"Yeah, well, we got the call and came right over," Neddie motioned the two detectives to follow her over to the area roped off by yellow "Do Not Cross" tape. There was a photographer carefully taking photos of the area. "Too late though, she was already dead."

"What's the apparent cause?" Knight and Schanke took a step closer to the body. It was a young girl, about thirteen or fourteen by the looks of her. She was dressed in faded blue jeans and a Toronto Blue Jays baseball shirt. The shirt, gray and blue originally, was soaked with blood.

"Multiple stab wounds, looks like she bled to death."

"Schanke?" Nick was about to ask his partner a question when he noticed that Schanke had left the immediate area. Nick began asking questions of the other officers, getting all the information needed to begin the investigation. The coroner motioned Knight over and reported his findings, then the ambulance arrived to take the girl to the Coroner's office. Satisfied that they had gotten enough photos and other physical evidence, he let her be taken away. Then he began to look for his missing partner. He found him sitting on the house's neglected back step. "Schanke," he called out gently.

"Yeah?"

"You okay?" Nick stood in front of his friend.

"Yeah, fine, it was just all that blood."

"I understand. They've taken her away. We'll get who did this."

"What's it matter? What difference will it make to her?"

"None, but maybe we can stop the person who did this from doing it again."

"Yeah, right. We get the person who did this, and then maybe he'll be out in a few years or months, but even that doesn't matter. Somebody else'll come along and kill the next kid," Schanke rubbed his eyes, his voice strained.

"Maybe. Look Schanke, you know how this is. We can't stop every murder from occurring. We can just do the best we can," consoled Nick.

"Yeah, and what if our best doesn't amount to shit? Another kid dead. Another little girl laying in a pool of her own blood."

"Schanke ..."

"What the hell difference do we make, anyway?" the detective glared at his partner, eyes red with tears. "All that blood everywhere!"

Nick studied his friend for a moment. This went far deeper than the terrible sight of the dead girl. Murder was horrible; it was even more loathsome when a child was involved. But this was the work Schanke had chosen for himself. He had exposed himself to horrors every night in order to make the city a little bit safer. This outburst wasn't coming from the scene that he had just left. Nick was sure that it was coming from the aftermath of the explosion. Myra had told him that Schanke wasn't sleeping well, had nightmares. But what could he say to comfort his friend? All the normal words would sound like hollow platitudes. "I know," he finally said, voice little more than a whisper. "I know." He put his hand on Schanke's shoulder as he sat down with him on the back steps.

"I keep seeing it. All that blood. Like a tidal wave coming over me. I close my eyes and I just keep seeing it. Shit, one minute it's some little kid bouncing a ball and the next it's just a bleeding hunk of meat with no life left in it. I just keep seeing it." The tears were rolling down Schanke's face, his eyes staring straight ahead into the night. He took a deep trembling breath.

There were no words that Nick could think of to say. He knew that Schanke would refuse to go to a psychiatrist unless directly ordered and even then, would he talk about his feelings to a stranger? He'd be fine once he got past the memory of the girl's death. Schanke's mind had fixated on the scene, was replaying it over and over again, every time dragging his mind back through the hell of it, every time the emotions getting that much stronger. The memory seeped into each sleeping and waking thought. If he could just get past it. Deciding, Nick gathered his strength and spoke to his partner. "Schanke, look at me." The only reply was a shake of his friend's head. "Schanke, look at me, now." Knight's voice commanded, becoming deeper, more compelling.

The other man looked over at him. If he noticed that Nick's eyes were now glowing red he didn't give any sign. He simply stared blankly.

"Forget it, Schanke. Forget all about the explosion and all about the blood," Nick ordered.

"Forget it," Schanke mumbled in reply.

"That's right, forget it," Nick's eyes dimmed and his voice regained its normal tone, "Forget it, Schanke, it gets to everybody sometimes."

"Yeah," Schanke stood up and dusted off the back of his pants. "Thanks, Knight."

"For what?" Nick forced a grin at his friend.

"You know, for not making fun of me getting a bit queasy at the sight of blood."

"Like I said, happens to everybody. Let's go." The two detectives left the backyard of the house and headed for Knight's car.

“O h good, you remembered to get diet soda this time,” Dr. Natalie Lambert called out, her head buried deep in Nick's refrigerator. She was rooting around for something to eat. Lately Nick had been remembering to keep some edibles on hand.

"I don't see why you want to drink diet soda, Nat. You're not fat."

"And I'd rather not get that way." The coroner picked out a box of frozen Twinkies from the freezer and brought them over to the couch along with her soda.

Knight looked at the combination she was about to consume. "Diet soda and Twinkies?"

"They're the low fat kind," she defended as she sat down on the couch. Opening one of the little plastic bags the Twinkies came in, she bit the end off one. Very carefully, she then proceeded to nibble away only at the golden sponge cake, carefully avoiding the creamy filling that was still frozen hard. Soon she was left only with the tube of filling in her hand, that she stuffed in her mouth, clearly enjoying the cold, sweet taste of it.

Nick had watched the proceeding culinary event with a mixture of fascination and horror. Fascination because, it was very interesting to watch Natalie dissect her food and horror because he had once read what Twinkies were made of. Natalie had been trying to encourage him to eat for months. So far, the success had been limited, but he had made the effort to at least purchase and examine food. After eight hundred years of a strictly blood diet, he had been intrigued by modern food. Intrigued and wondering if he shouldn't get a degree in chemistry so that he could understand what the ingredients were. Finally, his friend noticed his intense stare.

"What?" she asked, hands already reaching for another Twinkie.

"Nothing," he replied, deciding that discretion was called for. After all, he had never had a Twinkie, maybe they were quite good. Though Schanke claimed that anything with reduced fat in the title was a sick joke made up by some religious group that thought self-denial was good for the soul. Fat, he claimed, made things taste good. "What movie did you bring over?"

"Paint Your Wagon."

"A Western?"

"A singing Western. It's got Clint Eastwood in it," Nat informed him through a mouth full of cake. She had managed to whittle the second Twinkie down to creamy filling.

"Sounds interesting," Nick popped the tape into the machine and started it. Natalie had obviously seen it many times before and was singing along to many of the songs as they watched the movie. The phone rang.

"Leave it," Natalie urged him, "a good part's coming up."

"Okay," Nick agreed, wondering if it was actually Eastwood singing or not. The answering machine picked up and Schanke's loud voice intruded into the room.

"Hey, Knight? Enjoying your night off, or are you doing that angsty artist thing again? Anyway, wanted to tell you that I think I might have a lead on the Zinichka case. Somebody in the family has something they might be trying to hide," Schanke's voice was jubilant. "We can follow up on it tomorrow. Have fun! Hasta la bye-bye."

"He sounds good," Natalie commented after the message had ended.

"Yeah, he's back to his old self."

"The way he looked right after he came back from sick leave, I was worried he might have some problems. It was a traumatic event."

"Yeah, well, he did have some problems at first, but that's all behind him," Nick informed her off-handedly.

"Did he finally agree to go see a psychiatrist?"

"No, you know how he feels about that."

"What, then?"

"He just forgot about the incident, put it behind him," the detective kept looking at the TV screen.

"Uh-huh, and just how exactly did he manage to do that?" Natalie persisted, as though something struck her as wrong. "Schanke was very upset by the bombing. He wouldn't just have forgotten about it, not without help. You hypnotized him, didn't you?"

"Well, yeah," Nick confessed, "He got really upset one night. Wasn't doing himself any good replaying it over and over in his mind. So I just told him to forget about it."

"I don't think that was a good idea, Nick."

"Why not? He seems fine now."

"Yeah, but you can't just erase something like that from somebody's mind. There's bound to be repercussions."

Shaking his head in disagreement, "No, I don't think so. He just had to put the memory out of his thoughts. He's fine now."

"Okay, we'll see," Natalie acquiesced. She looked at him as though she didn't like it, but there was no reason to argue if it seemed to be working. She grabbed another Twinkie and went back to watching the movie.

He opened the door. It seemed like the thing to do. There was nothing else in the room at all, so he opened the door. Then he was outside. It was nighttime and he was outside. He was standing in a parking lot. There wasn't any noise and the dark seemed too bright to be called night. He looked at the building in front of which he was standing. The building was important somehow, he knew that. He started walking toward it. He was nearly to the building, a motel it seemed to be. When the noise hit him, and the light, and then there was blood pouring out of the motel. Coming at him nearly horizontally, gushing out from every window in the place. Hot, red liquid forcing him back, causing him to slip as he tried to get away. He kept slipping and he was afraid of falling. If he fell, all the blood would keep him down, drowning him, he knew it would. He had to keep on his feet, just a few more yards and he'd be all right. Just a few more yards and then he felt his right foot skid and he stumbled backward. Arms flailing, he tried to stop himself. Had to get his balance back, had to.

"And tonight there's a seventy percent chance of severe thunderstorms," a loud, cheerful voice blared at him. Schanke sat up and looked at the radio next to his bed dumbly. The radio had turned on, signalling it was time for him to get up. The dream already fading from his mind he wondered vaguely what had caused such a nightmare. "Too many sardines and onions," he mumbled to himself aloud as he got out of bed.

“About time you got here, Knight," Schanke called out to his partner as Nick walked into the precinct. He started putting on his coat. "Come on, come on, let's move it."

"What's the rush? Your lead on the Zinichka case that hot?" Nick questioned as he turned to leave the precinct. Schanke was hurrying toward the Cadillac.

"Well, let's just say that nobody likes a cold pierogi."

"Huh?" was Knight's only response as he hopped into his car and pulled away from the station. "Where to?"

"Over to Bay street. We gotta talk to a man about pierogies. Then we have to go over to the Vic."

"What's at the Vic?"

"Following up the lead that we got the other night on Summers."

Nick shook his head in warning, "Schanke, it's not our case."

"Yeah, I know. But hey, I figure that it might be related to the Zinichka case."

"How?"

"Mmm, synchronicity?"

"Do you know what that word means?"

"Sure I do, what do you think it means?"

Shaking his head in disbelief, Nick gave in, "Okay, fine, we'll go check out the Vic for any information on Summers. Who knows, maybe it is related." They drove in silence for the next fifteen minutes. Glancing over at his partner, Nick found him gazing thoughtfully out the window, chewing on his lower lip. "What number?" he finally asked.

"Huh?"

"What's the address?"

"Number 4302, uh," Schanke answered, realizing that they were on Bay Street. "Right over there," he pointed to a brick building with a large sign out in front that announced it as "Zinichka's Pierogi Factory and Restaurant."

"You were serious about seeing somebody about pierogies, weren't you?"

"Yeah, sure. Turns out that the two people who were killed owned quite a bit of this place. It was a family venture but the mother divided it among her kids a few years back when she decided to go to Florida and enjoy the sun."

"I think I'm beginning to get the picture."

"Always said you were a quick study, Knight. Anyway, some of the kids sold their shares so it came down to four of them owning the place. Now there's two of them."

"And let me guess, one of the two remaining ones is a little afraid for his safety."

"You got it," the two detectives parked the car and walked toward the front door of the restaurant. The "closed" sign was illuminated but there was still lights on inside, visible through a large plate-glass window. Nick knocked on the door.

"Are you the detectives?" a voice called out. They held up their badges, the door opened and a tall, olive-skinned man stood in front of them. "Come in, come in, let's get away from all that glass."

"You're Mr. Yuri Zinichka?"

"Yeah, that's me. Are you the guy I talked to yesterday?"

"I sure am, Detective Don Schanke," Schanke held out his hand, "and this is my partner Nick Knight."

"Thank you for coming."

"I'm sorry about your brother and sister, Mr. Zinichka," Schanke said sympathetically.

"Horrible, a horrible thing to happen to my family. Stefan and Anna were very dear to me. We'd always lived close to each other, you see and ..." his voice trailed off.

"You told us originally that you had no idea who killed your brother and sister, Mr. Zinichka," Nick prompted.

"Yes, you see I wasn't sure. Didn't want to believe it at first, but now, now I'm pretty sure it was my brother Joe that did it."

"That would be Joseph Zinichka?" Schanke questioned and the man nodded in agreement.

"Yes, my older brother. We'd been having our disagreements but who would have thought he'd resort to having them killed? Over pierogies?"

"Why do you think they were killed?"

"Health fillings," Yuri stated. At the looks of puzzlement on the detectives' faces, he explained, "Anna and Stefan wanted to expand the number of fillings we put in the pierogies. Low-fat cheeses, raisins, even some sort of bran mixture, that sort of stuff. Trying to get a larger market. The pierogi business is very competitive."

"I can imagine," Schanke responded.

"And Joe, well, Joe didn't want to tamper with Mama's recipes. Said it was sacrilegious or something."

"I thought your mother was alive?"

"She is."

"And what did she have to say about changing the recipes?"

Yuri shrugged his shoulders, "We asked her. She said 'Do what you want but remember I've lived eighty-five years eating lard and drinking garlic juice. You should tell your customers to drink the garlic juice if they want to live a long time.' So Anna and Stefan figured it'd be okay to try out the new fillings."

Nick had shuddered at the words "drinking garlic juice" but had recovered quickly, "Besides the fact that your brother was upset about the change, do you have any proof that he committed murder?"

"Well, he didn't kill them himself, you understand. He isn't too fond of blood so he hired these two guys to do it."

"What two guys?"

"The guys on this tape," Zinichka handed them a videotape. "It's from the surveillance camera. We're worried about getting robbed. You know how it is nowadays."

"So you've got your brother on tape hiring hit men?" Nick asked incredulously.

"Yeah," Yuri shrugged, "Joe, he's never been too bright."

The detectives spent the next fifteen minutes questioning Zinichka further, getting as much information from him as they could. Zinichka provided them with his sibling's likely whereabouts and names of the shadier characters his brother knew. Then they took the videotape and returned to the car.

"I cannot believe that!" Schanke exclaimed as he got into the car.

"What, that the guy let himself be videotaped hiring hit men or killing your siblings over pierogi filling?"

"Letting himself get videotaped. I mean, pierogi filling is a bit sacred after all." The two detectives laughed at the joke and Nick started the car and commenced toward the Vic. Both were happy that one investigation seemed to be going well.

It was a loud, seedy bar that had no coherent theme or decor to it unless you could count cheap beer as a theme. The odor of stale beer and vomit hit the two men even before they got the door to the Vic open. Glancing around, they didn't spot Summers, so they made their way carefully to the bar. The questions, responses, denials and conversation went like clockwork. No, no guy named Scott Summers came into

the bar, no, never saw him before, oh, murder of a little kid, huh, nope, never saw him in here but I bet if he did come in again it'd be on Monday, a lot of people wearing strange red sunglasses seem to come in on Monday, you're scaring the customers, why don't you leave.

"You ever notice that cheap beer smells really bad?" Schanke asked his friend as they left the bar.

"It's not the spilled beer, its the digested beer that gets me. We'd better get back to the station and work on the investigation we're assigned to."

"Yeah, guess you're right. You gonna give the information on Summers to Billy and Jenny?"

"Yes, it's their case Schank, no matter how we feel about it."

Schanke looked at his partner for a moment and then nodded his agreement. Then they headed back to work.

He was laying on the ground, staring up at the sky which was the harsh, metallic gray of an approaching winter storm. It began to snow. The flakes landed on his face and melted. Annoyed, he stood up and began walking across the gray, snowy, landscape. He noticed that there was a pond nearby. Walking toward it, he saw a little girl skating on the surface, her fluid motions beckoning to him. Then he noticed that it wasn't ice the child was on but some sort of dark fluid. Moving closer, he walked out onto the liquid on which the child was standing. Only he wasn't able to stand on it and quickly started sinking. Struggling backward, he tried to get back to shore. But he wasn't able to. He felt himself drowning in the water that wasn't water. It was blood and it was covering him and he was sinking fast. The child noticed his distress and came over. She looked down at him as he slipped deeper into the blood and gave a slight frown as he disappeared under the surface. Opening his mouth to dry to get one last breath, he tasted something hot and salty and ...

"Noooo," For a moment, Schanke wasn't too sure who had said the word, "No," but since he was the only one in the room it must have been him. Myra had already left the house for some yard sales. "Man, that was a bad one," he commented to himself as he got out of bed and into the shower. It was Saturday, a day reserved for things around home and family. Looking into the mirror as he shaved, he was glad it wasn't a work day. His eyes were ringed by dark circles, his skin very pale beneath them. Maybe he shouldn't have tried to go back to work so soon after being injured, he thought. Yeah, that's it, he told himself, that's probably what the problem is.

“And you think that she was dead before she was burned?" Nick spoke into the phone that was cradled between his chin and shoulder. Natalie was on the other end of the line, giving him the results of the autopsy she had just performed. "Well, that does agree with the confession. Yeah, yeah," he quickly wrote down the information she was giving him. "I'll expect the official report tomorrow then? Great. Yeah, we're still on for tonight. See you then, bye Nat." Putting the phone down, he noticed that Schanke was coming out of the men's room and heading toward his desk. His partner looked like hell. The dark circles that had been under his eyes for weeks now stood out deep purplish black against pale skin. Though Schanke had never been what Nick would have classified as neat, his appearance was generally fairly tidy, but today his shirt looked slept in and had damp spots down the front of it. "Are you okay?"

"Hmm? Fine," Schanke responded off-handedly. Picking up a folder off his desk, he stared at it blankly for a few moments.

"You're not fine, Schank. Do you have the flu or something?"

"No, no, nothing like that. Just didn't get much sleep this weekend."

Assessing his friend's condition, Nick made a guess at its cause, "Are you still having bad dreams?"

"No," Schanke said, a little too forcefully. "I just didn't get a lot of sleep the past two days, that's all." Standing up he went over to the coffee machine and started pouring himself a cup. His hands were shaking, Nick noticed. Walking back over to his desk Schanke asked, "Was that the Grey autopsy you were talking about?"

"Yes, it was," Nick responded, allowing the subject to be changed. "What McCoy said was true, she was dead before he burned her. Thought he was cleansing her of evil or something."

"Or something's right, another weirdo. When's the psychiatric evaluation due in?"

"Tomorrow. We'll get the official autopsy report then, too. Do you want to work on the Worthington case?" Not getting a response, Knight looked up from the papers he had been glancing through. His partner was staring into his coffee cup, swirling the brown contents around. "Schanke? Schank?"

"What?" Schanke started, the hand holding the coffee jerking involuntarily at being startled. The coffee went flying, all over the desk and his pants. "Damn it, Knight, don't scare me like that!" he said angrily, standing up and trying to wipe the coffee off himself.

"Having a drinking problem, Detective Schanke?" Captain Stonetree walked over to the pair. He was appraising the man with an impassive glare.

"No, Captain, just a little accident, that's all."

"You look like crap," Stonetree finally pronounced his evaluation of the subject.

"Why, thank you, and might I just say, you look quite nice today yourself," Schanke retorted.

"It's a new tie," the captain responded without a hint of a smile, "Are you sick?"

"No, as I was explaining to Detective Knight here, I just didn't get a lot of sleep this weekend."

"You still having nightmares from that bombing case?"

"What!" the darker-haired detective exclaimed, then he fixed his partner with a decidedly dirty look.

Nick held up his hands in appeasement, to say, no, I didn't tell him.

Reading the silent exchange between the two men, Stonetree continued, "No, Nick didn't tell me. The department psychiatrist mentioned that you were having them on her report. She didn't think it was serious at the time, but considering the way you look, now maybe she was wrong."

"Can't a guy have an off weekend without everybody thinking he's crazy!" Schanke angrily replied, throwing the file he was holding down on the desk and standing up from his chair.

"Sure he can. Are you sure that's all it was?" The captain's gaze never wavered from the detective's pale face.

"Yes, I'm sure, Captain."

"All right, then," Stonetree decided, "go home and get some sleep. But if you come in here again looking like the living dead I'm send you to talk to a professional, understand?"

"Understood," Schanke agreed, sitting down heavily in his chair.

Nick waited until the captain had left the area before saying anything to his partner. Maybe Stonetree should have pushed the issue more, he thought. Schanke did look like hell, but if he was so against the idea of talking to a psychiatrist, it probably wouldn't help. Then again, he added, maybe he wouldn't need help if I hadn't played around in his head in the first place. Maybe releasing the block would help?

"Well, have a nice night, partner," Schanke interrupted his line of thought.

"Yeah, I'll try and get some of the paper work you love doing out of the way. Look Schanke, if you want to talk about anything ..."

"I know you'll be glad to listen," his partner sighed loudly as he stood up, "That's just it, I don't have anything to talk about. I really don't remember the bombing at all. It's just that I'm having some problems sleeping, that's all."

"No bad dreams?" Nick asked with raised eyebrows.

"All right, a few bad dreams but they don't make any sense. I don't know, I probably just need a good night's sleep and it'll all be fine again."

"Yeah, that's probably it," Knight replied, not believing it at all. "Good night, partner."

"Yeah, 'night."

"And Schanke," Nick called out, his friend turning around before he left the building, "Pleasant dreams." His partner didn't even bother making a wisecrack as he left the station.

“Drink this," Natalie ordered, holding out an evil-smelling concoction.

"What is it?" Nick asked, wrinkling his nose at the odor.

"Ancient Chinese herbs, native American roots and Diet Coke."

"Diet Coke?"

"Yeah, it's the only thing that would dissolve the herbs and roots. I got the recipe out of some of those books you lent me a while back. Drink it."

"Thought you were taking a strictly scientific approach?" the blond detective asked as he took a small sip of the beverage, his face wrinkled in disgust at the taste.

"Folk remedies often do have a scientific basis. Modern science hasn't investigated what every naturally-occurring compound does. Many of our current medicines were originally based on herbs. Finish it up."

Taking a deep breath, Nick guzzled down the last of the beverage. When the taste finally receded enough for him to talk, he asked, "What's it supposed to do?"

"Increase your tolerance for the sun. After you've taken it for a week we'll see how you hold up with more sunlight."

"You mean I have to drink that every day?"

"Twice a day, actually," Natalie informed him as she handed him a tall bottle of the stuff. "So how was work? McCoy tell you anything further?"

"No, he's being evaluated now. I just wonder if he's done something like this before."

Natalie made a face and then replied, "I hope not. It's going to take days to get that burned smell out of the morgue. Yuck."

"Remind you too much of the last dinner you cooked?"

She responded by chucking one of the pillows on the couch at him. "Fine, see if I ever invite *your* friend and his wife over for dinner again. Speaking of your friend, how's Schanke doing? He looked like something Sydney dragged in the last time I saw him."

"Actually, he's not doing so good."

"Oh? What seems to be the problem, or should I take a guess?" Natalie sat on the chair facing Nick. She watched as he squirmed slightly. It amused her sometimes to watch his physical reactions. For an eight-hundred-year-old vampire, he sometimes managed to act like a little boy caught doing something he shouldn't. It was charming; actually, she thought, she found him too damned charming at times.

"You were right," Nick finally responded, looking earnestly at her. "I shouldn't have made him forget the bombing. I don't know how but it's affecting his dreams and making him more upset."

Natalie nodded and leaned forward, chin in hand, elbow resting on knee, "So, now that you know what the problem is, what are you going do to about it?"

"I don't know. I suppose I should make him remember again, only then he'll be as bad off as he was before, or worse."

"Maybe, but this time he can work through it naturally," Natalie commented. Sensing his guilt she continued, "Nick, you did what you thought would help. So maybe this time it didn't work out, it doesn't mean that next time it will. Now, come on," she stood up and tugged at his arm. "I don't want to miss the music."

"Where are we going tonight?"

"There's a new all-night bookstore in town. Tonight they're having live Celtic music and storytelling. Should be fun." The medical examiner went over and put on her coat. "Besides, they're supposed to have really good pastry."

"What is it with bookstores all of a sudden serving food?" Nick wanted to know. "For years they wouldn't let you in the store if you had any food with you and all of a sudden they're selling it?"

"How better to attract customers than the offering of sugar," Natalie explained, smiling at him. "Come on, someday you'll understand," She held up her arm and Nick took it as they left the apartment.

It was dark outside, the moon full in the sky. Its reflected light was making the windows on the building glow. He was standing in front of a door, a glass door. Beside it was a sign that said "lobby" on it. Opening the door, he entered. The room was deserted, with old frayed magazines on the table, and a desk that contained only an open ledger. Walking over to the ledger, he tried to read its contents, but he couldn't make out the words. The names kept changing as he read them. Then a bell rang. At first he could not figure out where the noise was coming from, and then he realized that an elevator was descending, about to open its doors. Walking over to the elevator, he waited for it to open. With one final ding of the bell, the door opened. For a moment he was confronted with a vertical sheet of liquid, a dark red liquid, then it started to pour out of the elevator. It happened ever so slowly, so slowly that he could see the top of the liquid start to fall, the bottom bulging out toward him, reaching for him. Back-pedalling, he started to move away from the elevator doors as fast as he could. The liquid was faster though, it hit him in the chest and pushed at him, pushed him backward. Struggling, he fell, but one arm managed to reach the handle of the lobby door. Forcing himself to stay upright, he managed to get the door open and lever himself out all in one motion. Not bothering to close the door, he ran out into the parking lot and was standing in front of a door, a glass door.

Beside it was a sign that said "lobby." Opening the door, he entered. The room was deserted, with old frayed magazines on the table, and a desk that contained only an open ledger. Walking over to the ledger, he tried to read its contents, but he couldn't make out the words. The names kept changing as he read them. Then a bell rang. At first he could not figure out where the noise was coming from, and then

he realized that an elevator was descending, about to open its doors. Fear gripped him, his heart beating loudly in his ears. He didn't want to see the elevator open, he knew that. He had to get away from it before it opened. He hurried over to the lobby door and tried to get out. But the door wouldn't open, no matter how hard he pushed on it. Then a bell rang. He turned around and watched as the elevator opened, it seemed like a giant mouth, disgorging its bloody contents toward him. Turning away from the sight, he redoubled his efforts to get the door open. Then the liquid hit him, warm and wet, and it pushed both him and the door forward into the night.

It was dark outside, the moon full in the sky. There was a hotel in front of him, a badly-lit neon side proclaimed it to be "McDonough's Motel." Walking forward, he was standing in front of a door, a glass door. Beside it was a sign that said "lobby." Opening the door, he entered. The room was deserted, with old frayed magazines on the table, and a desk that contained only an open ledger. Walking over to the ledger, he tried to read its contents, but he couldn't make out the words. The names kept changing as he read them. Then a bell rang. At first he could not figure out where the noise was coming from, and then he realized that an elevator was descending, about to open its doors. This time, he didn't wait, he ran toward the glass door. It wouldn't open, no matter how hard he pushed. Afraid that the elevator door was about to open, he jumped through the glass on the lobby door. As he did this, he felt himself being carried forward on a wave. It lifted him gently up and then tossed him down on the ground in front of the building. Staring at the hotel he saw that every window in the place was pouring blood. It was coming out toward him, gently arcing through the air. Standing up, he turned away to run.

It was dark outside, the moon full in the sky. There was a hotel in front of him, a badly-lit neon side proclaimed it to be "McDonough's Motel." Walking forward, he was standing in front of a door, a glass door. Beside it was a sign that said "lobby." He looked at the door and said, "No." Raising his fist he punched it as hard as he could through the door. There was the sound of shattering glass for a moment, then the pain started, and the blood began to flow.

"No," Schanke shouted as he sat up in bed. Disoriented, for a moment he couldn't quite figure out where he was. Glancing around in panic, he realized that he was in his bedroom at home. Then the pain in his hand hit him. "Ow," he yelped and then looked at his right hand; it was bloody. "Shit!" He jumped out of bed and landed on top of something sharp. Yelling again, he looked down, there were pieces of broken lamp all over the floor. He realized that the china lamp normally on the nightstand on his side of the bed was shattered on the floor. Looking again at his hand, he noticed that the blood was running down his arm as he held it up. Blood on his forearm, blood on his hands, coursing down his fingers as he moved his arm. Blood everywhere. Shaking, he stumbled toward the bathroom and wrapped his hand in a hand towel. He had to get out of here, had to get away from all the blood. Hastily pulling on his clothes, he glanced at the clock. He was late, he realized, he was late for work. Not a good thing since Stonetree had given him the night off before. Had to hurry, had to go somewhere. Where? Had to go to the motel, he decided. Had to find out where all that blood was coming from. He called out to Myra to tell her he was leaving, wondering briefly why the sound of the breaking glass hadn't brought her running, and then he remembered that she and Jenny had gone out in the afternoon for a girl's night out of dinner, a movie and late night ice cream since there was no school the next day. Looking again at the clock he moved even faster, he'd tell Knight that he couldn't come in. Give him the file that he'd been working on last night. Then he'd find the place. He had to hurry, though.

“Damn it, get out of the way," he yelled from his car at the person who was pulling out of the parking space he wanted. His body shook with agitation, hitting the accelerator he jerked the car into the spot. Slamming the door closed, he rushed into the station. Barely acknowledging the greetings that were tossed out toward him, he hurried over to Nick's desk.

“Here," Schanke thrust a file out to his partner.

"What's this?" Nick took the proffered papers and shot a puzzled glance at them. Then the smell hit him. Blood. Looking at his friend, he realized that Schanke's hand was wrapped in a hand towel that was soaked in it. "Did you cut yourself?"

"Yeah, yeah, something like that. I gotta go." Turning to leave, the detective started making his way back out of the station.

"Where are you going?" Nick shouted after him, and quickly grabbed his leather jacket. Following his friend, he caught up to him in the parking lot. "Schanke, wait." Seeing that he was being ignored, he grabbed his friend's arm and turned him around to face him. "What's going on?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" Knight noticed that his partner was pale and sweating. Grabbing Schanke's hand, he peeled back the cloth slightly. "That needs stitches. Come on, I'll take you over to the hospital."

"No," Schanke retorted, pulling his hand away. "Just leave me alone. I have to go find it." Spinning on his heels, he tried to leave but was stopped again by a hand on his shoulder.

"Find what?" Nick persisted.

"The hotel!"

"What hotel?"

"Never mind, now let me go," Schanke tried to pull away from Nick's grasp. "Let me go," he shouted, struggling to get out of the grip.

Sensing that they were causing a scene, Nick propelled his friend toward his Cadillac. Schanke was still struggling as Nick pushed him up against the car. "I am not letting you go, Schank, until you tell me what's going on," he kept his voice soft and reasonable.

"Nothing's going on. I've got to go someplace, so why don't you just leave me alone!"

"That's not an option. If you've got to go someplace I'll drive you."

"No!"

"Why not?"

Schanke looked away from his friend and tried, ineffectually, to get him to release his hold. "Because I don't know where it is," he finally explained.

"Then why do you want to go there?" there was no response, so Nick prompted, "Schanke, look at me. Where is it you'd like to go?"

"Motel, the motel I keep seeing at night," he explained, voice shaking, "I keep seeing it, it's all covered in blood. But I don't know where it is."

"Does it have a name?"

"There's a sign in the dream, it says 'McDonough's Motel'," came the strained answer.

"I think I know where that is. Get into the car and we'll go there together, okay?"

"Yeah, yeah, okay, Nick," Schanke gave in, too upset to argue anymore. Nick led him around to the other side of the car and let him in.

They drove in silence through the Toronto night. Schanke sat in his seat, arms wrapped around himself. Nick kept one eye on his friend as he drove. It's my fault, he thought, I did this. The best intentions, I had the best intentions and look what happened. Maybe nothing good ever does come from the vampire.

"There it is," Schanke yelled, pointing. Nodding, Nick pulled the car into the parking lot of the motel. The two men got out of the car and stared at the building.

"Why do I keep seeing it?" the detective asked, "Why do I keep seeing it all covered with blood? Am I going crazy, Nick?"

"No, you're not going crazy, Schank," taking a deep breath, Nick's eyes began to glow red, "Schanke, look at me." Turning a tear-streaked face toward his partner, Schanke looked at him. "Do you remember the explosion, Schanke? Remember the night we came here and the car exploded? That little girl you were talking to was killed. Remember."

Schanke looked at Knight for a long moment, memories pouring back into his mind, memories and the emotions that came with them. "Ah, Nick, she was only a little kid. A little girl in the wrong place at the wrong time. So stupid, so damn stupid." Schanke let the tears run down his face as he stared at the motel.

"Yeah, Schank, it was stupid." He put an arm around his friend's shoulder. After a few more minutes he led him back to the car. "Come on, we've got to get that hand of yours fixed."

Schanke sat at his desk, finishing the last of the paperwork on the Zinichka case. In the end, guilt and desire to reduce his prison sentence had prompted Joseph Zinichka to confess to hiring men to kill his brother Yuri. Joseph Zinichka had also given an impassioned twenty-minute speech on the sacredness of pierogi filling. Schanke did not include the monologue in his report. He spotted his partner and friend entering the station and called out, "Hey, Knight, you're late!"

"That's because I stopped to get you some doughnuts," Nick explained, offering him an extra large box. "Thought you'd like to celebrate."

"Sure, love to. What's the occasion?" the dark-haired detective asked as he took the box. He was still a bit pale but he looked a thousand times better than he had last week. After his hand had been stitched, he'd agreed to go talk to the "shrink," as he called the department's psychiatrist. The return to the motel had been a catharsis and he was already returning to his normal self.

"Summers has been brought in. Turns out he was the bomber."

"Why'd he plant a bomb where he lived?"

"It was meant for a partner he was tired of. The car was supposed to be used that night for a job."

"Ah," Schanke nodded in comprehension. "Well, that is a good reason to celebrate. Besides the fact that it's a miracle."

"What's a miracle?" Nick asked, not understanding.

"That Billy and Jenny actually solved a case on their own! Hey, you didn't get any cream filled ones!"

"They were out of them!"

"You could have gone to another shop, you know."

"Didn't your mother ever tell you not to look a gift doughnut in the mouth, Schank?" Nick retorted, smiling.