

Immortal Forever

by Kaden Brown

Will this summer go on forever? It had been two months without rain in the valley, which must be a record, or something. The never-ending light, even the complete absence of heavy cloud was beginning to feel more than tiresome: the sun had to go away one day.

Jaimie had taken to sleeping under the house. Melissa only ever came out of her room at night. Ben had stopped calling completely, and I was beginning to doubt even my own mental stability. In short, the long summer days of bright sunlight were messing with my head.

I made a mental note to get out of this rat-infested hole. Perhaps it would happen. One day. Though, if I did, what would my friends do? They'd probably gang-up on me and hound me until I stayed put. So mentioning my doubts about Simi Valley was out of the question. I'd lose my hearing before the three of them ceased their nagging.

Going out, leaving the house only at night was to be expected. You know, it sort of comes with the territory. In the sun we don't sparkle. We, more-or-less, desiccate within a matter of seconds – ten at the most – when exposed to direct sunlight, or ultraviolet light. It is conceivable that we *may* sparkle in those precious seconds before we explode into flame. I've never witnessed it, and certainly have no intention of finding out. Any sparkly vampire out there is about to be a really dead vampire.

We keep our secrets well. Not that we look any different to the majority of people. Our appearance is that of young adults, casual, confident, late teens, going out at night and coming home at all hours. Of the night that is. Pretty normal kids, right?

Wrong, actually. Yes we do frequently leave home and meet-up after sunset, and yeah, we have more than our fair share of god-given positive vibe. What the neighbors do not see are the tattered and bloodied clothes we sometimes return wearing, our eyes vaguely illuminated by a crimson glow coming from the fresh blood within. The Simi Valley sun meant that our hunting was restricted to the darkness. Daytime hunts were impossible. Maybe I should move to somewhere the sun doesn't shine. A good rainstorm and we'd have blood running in the streets at midday as myself and my kind enjoyed a free lunch. *Just kidding.*

Moving here had seemed such a great idea at the beginning of the year. Now though, it had become a lesson sorely learned. Instead of hunting were we trapped, unable to avoid the deadly light that with one moment of madness, or one chance of bad luck would both kill any one of us and betray our presence to the humans, who had for so long forgotten.

Wondering what time it was, if the sun was any nearer to going down, I glanced for the millionth time at the digital clock. Three-oh-three. Less than three hours left for me to sit in this Personal Sleep Unit, which is my safe place during the day. Fireproof, lightproof, and impervious to damage my PSU is a high-gloss white sheen, rounded and lockable. It can sleep two at a pinch, which thankfully was not right now.

Closing my eyes against the bright red digits of the clock I imagined what going to sleep would be like. Maybe it was something I missed, I'm not sure. In fact there was so much I thought about, that I imagined or fantasized about that I could barely recall the reality of my experiences. For hours I would think about sitting in the sun, atop a rock beside the ocean waves crashing. The warmth would flow through me and my eyes would survey the glistening sea and the

deserted beaches. At some stage in my human life I must have done exactly that. Unfortunately, close brushes with becoming sparkly vampire had diminished any such memory. To be honest, now, unlike when I was newborn centuries ago, thinking about being in the sun is about as terrifying and nightmarish I could ever contemplate.

My thoughts of enjoying the sun, were imaginings no vampire could entertain. Unless he or she had a death wish that is. And I do not.

For however long I stared at the clock I'm not sure. The saying that observed time slows down can only be true. It seemed like an eon until the clock showed six-fifty-two. Sunset in the valley, the time returning workers settle in for dinner, good children do their homework; the bad children with bad parents start heading out to play.

The image I put out is that of the latter, despite my average appearance. There is no point denying what I am, or what my friends are. We are bad and all those humans tucked away safely in their houses and apartments are good. Mind you, it is always possible to find good ones out after dark. That is what makes being *one of us* fun: the opportunity to live a vaguely normal life, even it is just for one night, for just one meal.

Giving myself a safety cushion of five minutes I unlatched the sleep unit just before the hour. It would still be twilight out there, but the sun's rays will be gone. It is the most magnificent and most emotional time for us. Seeing the sun shining on the clouds, the light sky in the west, until that azure blue becomes the deep, deep dark blue of the shadow world. A world that will last but a night – yet be ruled by those of us who are vampire, immortal forever.

Before I could climb out of the sleep unit the sounds of activity in the house came to me. It was probably Melissa searching the kitchen cupboards and fridge for either blood or vodka, or both. I assumed it was her, considering it was one of her unique style of slamming doors I heard. Before leaving my darkened room I straightened the fluffy throw used as my mattress and closed the unit's lid. Raised voices came from outside and I went to join them.

“You said last night you weren't gonna take stuff Jaimie!” Melissa was kicking-off on someone. It didn't take a rocket scientist to know whom.

“What? Me? I've done nothing. Why do you think I prefer to sleep outside than in here?” Jaimie left it dangling there, an unsaid observation that we all knew referred to me, or more precisely, my peculiar eating habits.

“You ain't fessing up then? No surprise there!”

Entering the kitchen, my eyes squinted against the sudden flood of fluorescent light that blinded me. Melissa and Jaimie stopped arguing and turned, surprised or embarrassed at being caught red-handed taking about me. Judging by Jaimie's demeanour and reticence to look at me he felt the latter.

“Yes,” I said, sidling into the kitchen, fingertips letting the door softly close behind me. “Crazy girl awakes to a scene from a pantomime and instantly remembers why she hates this place.”

“Anna, we can't find the box. The one with the bags in them,” Melissa explained, with an apologetic air, all calm, collected and demur.

Opening the fridge door it was clear that our supply had gone. I looked away for a second and then back at the vacant space of the shelf. The box of blood bags had vanished.

Melissa and Jaimie were both looking expectantly at me, as if I had the answer to this mystery.

“It wasn’t me guys. I’ve been in my PSU all day. Heck, All of us have only just got up and come in here, so I don’t think it was any of us.”

Jaimie seemed to accept my innocence in this and stood leaning on the kitchen island. We all looked unhappy that our source of sustenance had gone.

Melissa spoke first. “Somebody had to have taken it.”

“It wasn’t any of us.” Jamie retorted.

Visually scanning the entire kitchen for any sign of the blood I was about ready to move on.

“It’s gone. Someone took it – not one of us. That means someone came in here and stole it.”

The room fell silent as we thought about this. It was inconceivable that such a thing would happen.

“If they came here and took our blood, then they know.” Melissa explained, as if she had single-handedly come to this conclusion. “How can they know?”

Pacing around the kitchen I tried to smell the lingering odor of any intruder. With little sniffs I drew in the atmosphere and tasted the air. Nothing but stale blood, ammonia from the regular cleaning, and a faint mixture of lingering smells from the outside still on their own clothes and bodies. Sweat, perfume, saliva, alcohol and – coming from Jaimie – the decidedly unpleasant smell of waste. And the smell of blood on his breath.

Now I knew it was coming from him, the stench levels seemed to multiply as my anger boiled. It was repulsing. He was repulsing, in both his hygiene and his morals. I took a step back, but was unable to lessen the awful smell or the utter sense of tiredness at these childish games I had landed myself in.

“What have you been doing? You stink of blood Jaimie. You drank our blood.” For a long time I just glared at him, there in the kitchen. No one said anything. What he had done he confirmed as his face betrayed a smile, as if he was gleeful of the thieving prank he had committed. My anger erupted and I suddenly lunged across the kitchen, knocking the preparation counter aside, and taking his neck in my hand. I smashed his head against the cupboards. And again, with all the fury I could muster. Every fibre of my soul told me to rip his head off and destroy him for doing such an insulting thing. Communal blood, like group property was ours to share. For any one of us to claim it as their own was tantamount to disrespecting and betraying the whole. Vampires need discipline and cohesiveness. We need rules.

“Betrayer! Stealing what is ours. Can you not so control yourself that you must ingest our precious food?” I did not expect an answer, and all I got for my growling into his terrified face was a guttural sound and a shake of the head. Jaimie was scared; I was furious. “Every drop of blood you steal is another human we, *I*, must drink from. You inconsiderate little newborn prick!”

With that I surrendered to the void, giving up on the never-ending petty arguments I had found myself surrounded by, and walked to the front door.

I left that house like I had left the house I had been born and raised in. It was a long time ago, yet in those few steps of giving up it was the same feeling of hopelessness and dream of hope that guided me. For centuries I had done things and lived life like no mortal being, for my life was not something any sane person could either envy or imagine.

Being immortal forever is damnation beyond any, yet an instinct so great it is universal. Walking into the hot simmering summer night of Simi Valley was like that night before any of this life had even begun.

Moscow, May 1547.