

The Red Pill

Detective David R.P. Rogers was currently mourning the death of his relaxing evening consisting of a glass of brandy and a book by the fire. This evening had been abruptly taken from him not an hour prior by the sound of a telephone ringing. He was speaking to a younger detective, who was chatting to him conversationally about new bodies that had been found.

“...right down to the spatter, I’m telling you, I don’t know how we’re going to catch these fuckers,” he was saying.

“Since when do Night Crawlers attack in urban areas?” the Detective asked, staring longingly at his glass of brandy, taunting him from the coffee table.

On the Detective’s face was the ghost of a man who was once handsome, killed many years ago by disappointment and tragedy. His weathered appearance was now typical of what one would expect to find of a senior detective.

“Who cares? They’re monsters. You saw what they did to those people last week. Torn to bits. Sure, they look like people, but with those four teeth...”

“And you’re sure there was nothing to identify the Crawlers who did it?”

There was a pause on the other line before the younger man spoke. “Actually, there was- instead of the four-tooth bites Crawlers usually leave- you know, how their four front teeth are slightly elongated and really sharp, right?” he asked, and the Detective murmured his understanding, “This Crawler left only three-teeth bite marks.”

This resonated with the detective as odd. It was unusual enough for a Crawler to kill a person, as doing so was an offence punishable by quarantine, starvation, and experimentation, but for a Crawler to be missing one of their four front teeth...

“Call your wife.”

This drew the Detective’s attention back to present. He could tell by the silence on the other end of the line that the other man was nervously awaiting his reply. Few people mentioned the Detective’s wife.

“No,” the Detective said quietly.

“Look, I wouldn’t be asking if it weren’t-“

“No.”

“She’s our only connection to-“

“No.”

“For the love of God, David-“

“My wife is dead.”

This silenced the younger man. They were both perfectly aware that his wife was not dead, but the younger detective knew what he meant. They said their goodbyes somewhat stiffly, and the Detective hung up the phone.

He dreaded nighttime, as a glass of liquor and late night television until he passed out were the only ways he could sleep, ever since his wife changed.

At around three, he went and dressed himself in his robe, and went to the bathroom to prepare for bed. He took his toothbrush and began to wet it in the sink, but paused, placing it back on its pedestal. His eyes drifted to the reflection of the door in the mirror.

“Caroline.”

The bathroom door closed gently, seemingly without cause, but he knew she was there.

“David,” came her soft voice, and a shiver slivered down his spine.

He could not see her in the mirror, but he suddenly felt her behind him.

“Turn around, David,” she purred into his ear. “Let me see your handsome face.”

He felt her arms trace up his own, leaving a trail of goose bumps in her fingers’ wake. She wound her arms around him, and for a moment, he felt like he used to. He looked down and saw her pale arms- much paler than they were before she changed.

“What do you want?” he said breathily.

“To see you,” she said simply.

He felt his heart flutter, but ignored it. He knew her better than that. “You want to know about the bodies,” he guessed. She didn’t reply, but he felt her fingers, now playing with the belt on his robe, freeze for a moment before continuing.

David turned around, though her distance to him did not change. “You know I can’t talk about it.”

“But you will anyway. You always used to,” she said silkily, her green eyes shining.

“Why do you want to know?”

“If my kind are responsible for an attack, I want to do whatever I can to help,” she said and it was only because David knew her so well that he could tell she was lying. However, the way Car’s fingers were playing with his robe made it so that he didn’t care.

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He told Caroline about the case. He was vague on details, he didn’t want to give her too much, but enough to reassure her. He slept peacefully after their night, and woke up in his bed, though they had finished nowhere near it. Car had left a note saying she had to leave on urgent matters but would be back soon. Though he knew it was untrue, he tucked it away in his nightstand drawer anyway.

He thought about the night, the way their bodies had moved, the way he’d held her, and the way she smiled at him. And though he knew, he found that he really didn’t care either way- for a night, things were like they were when he’d been the happiest in his life. He found it easy to pretend that she meant what she’d written in the note, and the things she’d said to him.

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Later that day, the Detective called the younger man.

“I’ve been up all night with these bodies, and they’re killing me. There’s hardly anything of them left except the few bite marks on some of the arms. I don’t know how we’re going to find this guy, Daniel,” he was saying. “Did you call your wife?”

The Detective paused. His hands were strangely steady when he spoke. He thought about Caroline, thought about their night together, and he found himself saying, “I did. She answered, we talked for a bit. She doesn’t know anything.”

“Are you sure you were thorough? Can she come down to the station any time soon?”

“She’s very busy, she won’t be able to make it. But she doesn’t know anything. I’m sure of it,” he recited convincingly.

There was a sigh. “Alright. Hey, I know that was hard for you, but thank you for doing it. It was for the good of the case. If there’s anyone we can count on to do the right thing, it’s you, Daniel,” he said.

The Detective smiled. “That, you can.”

He felt bad lying to the younger man. He thought of Caroline, and how he noticed as she spoke to him the night before that one of her teeth was missing. This confirmed what he’d suspected- but the way he saw it, if he told the younger man the truth, Caroline would never come by for information again. So, he lied- something he would continue to do until Caroline was caught. He knew it was inevitable, but for a little while, she would need him.

The Detective had spent his day reading a relaxing book. By the time night rolled around, he found himself growing tired before the clock struck midnight. And for the first time in twelve and a half years, the Detective slept like a baby.