

Part I: Chapter I

Defiantly, he stood before the mirror and saw nothing. The mirror could not reflect his image. The mirror and its profound blankness reminded him of time. Nine hundred and twenty-seven years had transformed his face into an ancient portrait. Long, black eyebrows arched dramatically above haunting, olive green eyes and full, sensuous lips perfectly complemented an aquiline nose.

He gently held the shaving brush, made entirely of pure badger hair, and skillfully applied a layer of sandalwood cream. The straight edge razor glided over his skin in fluid motion, as he leaned against the sink, dressed only in tailored pants. An empty glass remained by his side, still wet with red drops where his lips had touched the rim.

Sir William Simon Hennessy desired fresh blood. His belly absorbed the first glass in one swallow, a quick pick-up as a precursor to the day's feedings. He wiped the remaining cream under his chin and tossed the damp towel into the tub. A fresh sea scent of eau du toilette was splashed on his neck and clean face, followed by running a fine-tooth comb through his full head of short, white hair.

"Bring her to me," he ordered to the two men waiting in the next room. He stepped out of the

bathroom and turned to the dresser, slipping a cherry red ruby onto his pinky finger and a second gold ring on his index finger, delicately engraved with the emblem *Scotland Forever*. He had no need for watches. To the precise minute, he could accurately estimate the time of day. Time was the crystal clear reflection of Sir William, inescapable and eternal, conforming to his body like an old, favourite wrinkled leather jacket.

He selected a silk, long-sleeved shirt and left the buttons undone, watching as the young lady pulled the bed's cotton sheet over her.

“Did you enjoy your meal, my dear?” inquired Sir William.

“Like totally...the most expensive stuff on the menu, filet mignon, mussels, escargot swimmin' in garlic butter and cheese. God, it was so fucking good...and a bottle of vino and smoked oysters too. I'm a stuffed teddy bear...are those guys your sons?” came her rapid-fire question, patting a very bloated stomach.

Sir William judged her age, noting her mascara and foundation had been applied liberally, to make her look more mature than her tender years.

“Devotees, you could say, and that is good, my dear, eat heartily while food is plentiful. A woman should cultivate an appetite. I am not impressed with the waif-like appearance of today's girls, very unhealthy. Besides, if you knew this very evening was the last evening of an

extraordinary life, would you not be happier going on a full stomach?"

"That's a crazy thing to say, man, like, why would tonight be my last night. And you really think my life is extraordinary?"

"Extraordinary, indeed, all life is while it lives and breathes."

"Whatever..."

He smiled warmly and ran his hand down her thigh, bending over to kiss her wine-drenched lips. Sir William preferred young women, never older than twenty-one or younger than sixteen. Female blood for him represented the pinnacle of taste, how taste should be characterized if taste could be conceptualized with one description. To him, the blood of women was crisp and sweet like red raspberries, turning blandness into everything, wanting of nothing else.

A strand of hair wound around her ear, curled on her cheek. Sir William brushed it off. Her name was Hanna. At the Mercury Lounge, some four hours before closing time, she was enticed to come to Sir William's house for a party by two gorgeous men. They took their time chatting with her, until she believed she made lifelong friends. Afterward, they insisted on dinner, offering to cover her bill.

“Blood is integral to all existence,” commented Sir William.

Hanna looked down at her exposed nipples, and looked back at Sir William for acknowledgement of her beauty, her youth; instead he only winked. Her eyes scanned the room. The furniture was warm, thick woven dark wicker; walls painted in blushed pink with winter green carpeting. The four-poster bed overpowered the room.

“You own these digs, man?”

“Digs? Ah, you mean the house...renting,” came Sir William's response.

“They've got awesome digs in Sandy Hill, like these.”

“Yes, the house is suitable for my purposes,” said Sir William, seated beside. Her eyes tilted up to look at his strong torso.

“Man, you smell awesome and you've got like this totally hot body,” she said as her fingers groomed his chest hair. Sir William was relaxed and ready. Typically, women were delivered to him compliant and oblivious, having been plied with alcohol and the local, available chemical concoction. In early years, he aggressively pursued prey, relishing the helpless screams and thrashing. But in later years, his much later years, he cultivated a habit of compassion for the weak and settled on gorging his appetite on what he referred to as diluted females.

“I'm feeling no pain,” said Hanna with an extended giggle. “I glug-glugged way too much vino at the lounge and restaurant and I dropped some 'E' right after and it's kickin' in, so I'm like totally blissed out. What happened to the boys?” she asked.

“They wait for us elsewhere.”

“Whatever...I gotta pee, something fierce like,” said Hanna. She staggered, naked, to the bathroom and plunked her thin body on the seat, not bothering to shut the door. Sir William leaned against the bed's headboard. He watched her shoulders slouch as she urinated, a quiet stream built into a force of loud trickles, hitting the porcelain.

Women fascinated Sir William, especially the young who had few inhibitions and even fewer expectations. He was content to watch. Waiting was neither an effort nor a bore for him. He waited until she flushed, buttoning his shirt, gradually working upward, closing the holes mindlessly, then put on a pair of black, wool socks.

“Do not forget to rinse your hands thoroughly,” he reminded. Hanna smiled. He heard vigorous splashing as she washed up. Sir William noticed she dried her wet fingers by rubbing them up and down against her thighs.

“Care to take a walk to the basement with me?” suggested Sir William.

“But I'm totally buck naked, man,” came Hanna's reply.

“Mmm, and a fine body you do possess...all the more reason why I want you and your youthful nakedness to join me.”

“If that's where the party is, that's where I'm goin',” said Hanna. The alcohol and pill had worked magic, slurring speech and dulling her thinking. Her glassy eyes amused Sir William as he stood up from the bed, holding out his arm. Hanna gave him her hand as he walked in front. She patted his bum, laughing.

“For an ol' guy with grey hair you're fucking hot to look at,” observed Hanna.

“That is very kind of you to say so again. I have never thought of myself as old, however. When speaking of age, I prefer to use the terms evolved or refined.”

“Refined...yeah, that's what I should say to mom and dad...they're refined, not old...like, how refined are you?”

“Precisely?” asked Sir William, turning back his head.

“Give or take a few years,” she replied.

“Nine hundred and twenty-seven years.”

Hanna roared with disbelief. “Come on, man, tell the truth. You like close to sixty, maybe?”

“Nine hundred and twenty-seven years, to be exact. In seventy-three years I will reach the milestone of one

thousand but who counts after the first five hundred years?”

“You're too funny, man. Don't sweat it, though I don't care if you're close in age to my ol' man,” came Hanna's reassurance. “I like old farts 'cause they're easier to please.” She teetered as they entered the short hallway, wobbling to the outer basement door.

Sir William opened the door and motioned her to go in ahead.

“After you, my dear.”

“Why thank you, kind Sir,” she mockingly replied, still laughing, unaware as to what awaited her down below.

The cold basement closed in tightly as the narrow, claustrophobic cement walls retained dampness and darkness. The oak wood floor was old and scratched and worn and creaked with every step. Empty Jack Daniels bottles, from top counter to ceiling, lined a sturdy rosewood bar; with full bottles of unopened wine and stacked cases of beer. Clean goblets and beer mugs hung from curved hooks above an old-style Coca-Cola mirror, promoting the benefits of consuming a smooth and refreshing drink. Sir William avoided the mirror.

“Wow, like you've got a shit load of booze to party with...woo hoo!”

“Red wine or beer, my dear?” asked Sir William.

“Both for sure,” came Hanna's slurred reply. “My bro’ says I'm not supposed to mix hops with the grape but I could give a flying fuck 'cause alcohol doesn't affect me the way it fucks up my girlfriends.” Sir William didn't care for her vulgar speech. Saying nothing, he smiled and walked around the bar.

“Sit, my dear...over there...on the leather chair.”

She plunked herself into the chair as Sir William uncorked a bottle. Hanna didn't notice the men standing in the corner; neither moved.

“What happened to those hot boys, man?” she asked.

“Right behind you,” said Sir William. Hanna turned, leaning out of the chair, twisting her body around to look. She couldn't focus.

“It's too dark, man.” A switch clicked on and the brightness forced Hanna to squint until her sight became clear.

“Oh, man, there you guys are...why the hell are you hiding?”

Saying nothing, the men looked to Sir William for guidance.

“They will not address you until I say so,” pointed out Sir William.

“Why the hell not?”

“Because, my dear, your purpose is to attend to me now that half of their role has been successfully completed.”

She took a moment to consider his words with a foggy mind. She turned her head away. “Whatever, man...it's your party.”

Hanna could not see her, could not glimpse the prone body lying on the floor hidden behind the bar, the dead, shriveled body of a young woman whose head was twisted behind her back with mouth agape in exclamation and eyes frozen into holes of horror. One clean puncture to her arm was evidently fresh. Sir William remained inside the bar as he poured a healthy serving of wine. He stepped out from behind and handed Hanna the full goblet. She touched his crotch.

“Like, do you expect me to suck you off or something like?”

“I screw women blind,” Sir William said pointedly. Hanna scoffed.

“You mean a fuck from you and women can't see anymore?” she qualified.

“In a manner of speaking, that is correct,” answered Sir William.

“Yeah, right, you guys are all alike, think you're God's gift to women just 'cause your dicks get hard.” The combination of alcohol and chemicals obliterated all pretence with Hanna. Her head tilted downward, heavy and laden by the combined effects of both substances. Sir William helped steady her glass.

“I do not jest,” said Sir William. “If I were to have intercourse with you, here and now, you would

undoubtedly receive the best screwing of your life but unfortunately you would be rendered helplessly blind after the deed was over.”

Hanna laughed as she gulped; her raucous laughter hit the low ceiling and bounced off the walls, reverberating in Sir William's ears. Wine snorted out of her nose and onto her breasts. Sir William laughed along. He looked at the men whose eyes registered the thrill that was to come. Still, they would not speak or move; neither appeared to be breathing.

“Even when inebriated, there is sublime beauty to be appreciated in the naked female form. You would put many women to shame by yours,” remarked Sir William.

“Whadd'ya say?” asked Hanna. She downed the wine and turned the goblet upside down for the last drops, dribbling them onto her extended tongue.

“Pay attention, my dear. I said you are beautiful. Was your mother or father from the Philippines?”

“Yeah, man, how'd you guess? Mom's a Philip and dad's a Brit.”

“I have a good eye for heritage. Young women are my specialty, you see and to date I have indulged, so to speak, in one female of each race, with the exception of some of the surrounding islands in the South Pacific. I am not fond of competing with cannibals, albeit the few tribes which remain as active cannibals in this day and age,” said Sir William with a sardonic smile.

Hanna was close to passing out. His words did not register. Sir William wanted her lucid. He held the back of her head, sternly smacking her cheek with open palm, startling her to consciousness.

“Fuck off, man! That stung.”

“Yes, that was my intention, to shake you awake,” said Sir William.

“Are we going to fuck or do I have to beg your boys?”

Sir William glanced back. Both men stood at attention, their hands and arms straight against their bodies.

“Are you feeling alert?” asked Sir William.

“After your whack, yeah, hit me again mother fucker and I'll kick the crap out of you.” He thought her aggressiveness delightful. He wanted to continue engaging her in conversation. Sir William was a master conversationalist, able to converse in over fifty languages. The change for him resulted in developing a facility for language, notwithstanding acquiring immortality and extra-sensory abilities.

“My dear, allow me the pleasure of offering you the benefit of choosing between two options. For the first, you may enjoy the bodies of my devotees, either one or both, which I have no doubt will also be to their gratified enjoyment, after which you and I shall dance the eternal dance. Or two, you may forego indulging in these fine, young men and move straight to me.

However, I should point out the first option guarantees satisfaction and I strongly recommend taking what pleasure there is to offer before the inevitable arrives.”

Hanna said nothing. She looked into her glass. “Does anyone want an empty glass?” asked Hanna.

Sir William was delighted with her surly attitude and spunk. He rose from his kneeling position and returned to the bar. As he stepped behind, he glanced at the lifeless woman. He stopped and reflected on the pallid colour of her cheeks and how the contrast brought out the brilliance all the more with dry blood on her skin. Flashing back, he remembered how she struggled, and got loose, panicked and made a valiant effort to escape, enticing Sir William to break her neck.

Hanna was not afraid or visibly perplexed by the scene. Sir William thought it foolhardy she could not comprehend the looming danger. He continued to learn and adapt to the societal changes of the human species, particularly the drastic changes to females in the last one hundred years. Sir William mused that if he were a woman of Hanna's youth and beauty, he would not accept any form of gratuity from two anonymous men, regardless of their attentive or giving natures.

Sir William looked hard at Hanna and accepted with equanimity that it was already too late for her.