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The Vampire Children

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At four Lucy was diagnosed with a sleep disorder that bore the hallmarks of insomnia. The medical profession was slow to diagnose her as such due to her tender age, the condition most often occurring in stressed-out adults. Her parents were first alerted when, like their other children, she often woke in the night. Unlike their other children, however, her temperament on these occasions was not one of irritability but playfulness. The condition persisted long past infancy; and after exhaustive efforts to get her into a regular pattern of sleep, they finally gave up and banished her to a bedroom of her own. There, at two in the morning, she could be found dressing her three antique dolls in black lace for a picnic under the stars.

The years softened her condition to the point where she could sleep for several hours when she first put her head down and again for several hours before daylight. Despite her improvement she always revived during the period of, what might be termed, pure night from 1.30am to 3.30am. It wasn't unusual for her to take naps throughout the day, often on her lunch break or on the journey to and from school; and not surprisingly she developed a reputation for being a sleepy head. This made her the target of many jokes, and as a result she would crave these solitary hours when she would plot her revenge or just soar in her secret fantasy world. She would stand at her window inviting the night to take her away from the dark forces that threatened her daylight hours.

Jonathan lived several streets away in the end house of a secluded avenue. The house had a history in that it was the scene of a crime of passion in the twenties, when a wife slit the throat of her husband while he slept. His mistress suffered a similar fate while his wife was awaiting trial, the assailant in this case was the wife's best friend, but this was never proved. The house fell to the eldest son who was driven mad by events,

especially as on the fateful night his father's blood had dripped down through the floorboards and soaked his young lips, a taste he could never quite remove. Unsurprisingly he hanged himself in his forties, and it was his room that Jonathan now inhabited. His parents were out-of-towners who put history down to history, and were really interested in restoring the property to its former glory, his father being a DIY enthusiast. So they moved in, re-painted the house, and were the envy of their neighbours whose hopes for more entertaining gore seemed prematurely aborted.

It wasn't clear when, exactly, Jonathan 'changed'. That was the word his parents used. It appeared to them that they were raising a perfectly normal child, in fact a very beautiful boy with flowing locks of wheat-blond hair and skin as pale as blue tinted snow that falls on frozen rivers. He had never caused them a moment's worry: perfect schoolwork, perfect friends and perfect manners. However, as his teenage years progressed his behaviour became more erratic. The first outward change was his dress, which seemed suddenly to age twenty years while harking back several hundred. Then he moved into his bedroom permanently, taking his meals on his own at a large handcrafted oak table. Soon the strains of eerie cello solos, haunting boy sopranos, and a solitary bagpipe wafted from within, filling the house with a terrible sense of broodiness that seemed to soothe the unquiet souls of the former inhabitants.

The only way his friends could explain his 'change' initially was to class him as a Goth – a teenage subculture who wore dark clothes, painted their faces white and listened to painful, haunting pop music. After having indeed been adopted by a local group of Goths for a short period, he was soon dropped on the pretext that he was too weird - even for them! His spookiness stemmed not so much from his appearance, which was odd but

excusable, but from his manner which was detached to a degree of being otherworldly. His reputation for being 'out there' was solidified by an incident in the science laboratory, when, to freak out a group of girls who were making fun of him, he licked the blood of a freshly dissected mouse from the blade he was holding. This incident spread like wildfire around the school, and indeed the town, so that before long he was accused of Satan worship, practising voodoo and being proficient in the arts of black magic.

Relief was to be had in his nightly visits to the graveyard where he would hang around the gravestones listening to the voices of the dead. They spoke to him not through words but through their auras, which he could sense from their names and sundry pieces of information about their lives engraved on the headstones. He could tell how restfully they were sleeping in death and even what mood they were in on any particular evening. He would often surmise that he was half-dead himself as he only felt at home in the cold chill of silence that hung in the air. In his heart a stillness beyond anything life could penetrate prevailed, even the swirling wind crying with the anguish of the ages, failed to move him. He was locked in a netherworld between life and death, untouched by either, but revolving in a pyramid of darkness that caught only the night in its vices, and this he reflected.

It was returning from one of these graveyard excursions that he caught sight of Lucy's golden silhouette at her window. What erupted inside him was something he had longed for, something he didn't recognise as darkness but brilliant light emanating from her body in Technicolor rays. He let out a deep, soaring moan that she received by loosening her nightdress to reveal her ripe, supine breasts. With astonishing agility he crawled up her drainpipe and buried his head between them; then buried himself in her

loins with the same agility, crawling into her like an insect. At orgasm he bit into his prey's back and drew her warm, delicate blood, which he spread over her entire back as if marking her as his. He then vanished, leaving her feeling half-dead on the sheets.

About two weeks later the town was rocked by the disappearance of a three-year-old boy. The child was allegedly removed from his bed in the dead of night and whisked away into the darkness without sight nor sound. Having made exhaustive searches of the local river and surrounding countryside, the police turned their attention to extensive interviews with the inhabitants. When one neighbour happened to mention that she had spied Jonathan lurking in the shadows long after everyone else had retired – and this was confirmed by several others who, if they didn't see him on this particular night, had seen him on many others – he was called in for questioning. This, in the bloodthirsty eyes of the town, signified guilt. However, despite the police's best efforts to nail him, he was saved by a rationally minded lawyer. The fact that Jonathan walked to the graveyard every night was a point in his favour in that he was doing nothing unusual, the lawyer informed the local investigating officer. He was released, but not forgiven.

His family was still looked on by many as out-of-towners and was mercilessly ostracised. As the investigation wore on and no sign of a child or a child killer emerged, Jonathan became the scapegoat, receiving abuse from protective mothers on the street and being spat on by their children in school corridors. They decided to move; or rather the decision was made for them, when they returned from a holiday to find their house sprayed with the words 'GET OUT OR ELSE'. Lucy, who had not seen him since the incident, was taken ill and hospitalised with a freak case of internal bleeding. Such was

the loss of blood that she was soon knocking loudly on heaven's door, but fortunately was denied entry and the transfusions eventually revived her.

Although no man ever really satisfied her sexually again, she went on to produce four children, one of whom developed a strange affinity to a bat who had mysteriously taken up residence in their attic.