

## Thetherson, As Night Approaches

*I am a vampire. I am a vampire.*

*I am Vampire Vic. For two years they've been asking for it. Tonight, I will own it.*

So thought Victor Thetherson, leaning forward so that he could just see the back of the head and shoulders of his employee, David Copperfield. Unfortunately not the magician.

Friday, 4:52 p.m., the close of a terrible week. Victor had caught hell for budget overruns on a big project, and now they were two weeks late on a report due to corporate. And yet his accounting staff had seen fit to knock off early for happy hour, leaving the office nearly deserted.

Conditions were perfect.

*I can do this. I am a vampire. One bite and we'll both be changed, for the better. David needs it...*

At the very least, David deserved it. He had been “putting the finishing touches” to the overdue report for the past two weeks. Victor had spent so many of those three hundred and thirty-six hours peering through his small office window, he saw David’s framed, silhouetted bust when he closed his eyes.

David capped a series of chair stretches by limbering up his veiny neck like a boxer about to answer the bell. Victor practiced some vampire speak to amp himself up.

*Insolent pup, do you think that extra layer of muscle will stop my razor-sharp fangs from plowing into your throat!? Go on, David Copperfield, stand in front of the gym mirror and grunt your way through another set of shoulder shrugs—your blood will spill no less easily! Your fit heart will only pump the blood all the quicker into the ravenous mouth of the vampire!*

Victor gagged at the thought of a mouthful of warm blood and clamped his hand to his mouth in case retching progressed to hurling. Put his head to the desk and thought about assets equaling liabilities plus equity, and when that didn’t work, bunnies wrestling kitties (bunnies victorious), until the spasm settled, leaving behind a sheen of sweat on his desktop and a bad taste in his mouth.

*What is wrong with me?! Why do I suck so bad?*

*I don't suck, Victor reminded himself. That's the problem.*

David mouse-clicked with a theatrical flourish and shut off his monitor, tidying his desk for the weekend. With a snarl Victor jumped to his feet. *I can do this!* Time to suck, in a good way.

Wincing on the pin pricks of an early-stage limb nap, he shook his leg until blood flow resumed and hobbled to yank open his office door. Like magic, David Copperfield was standing there.

“G’night,” said David, gym bag slung over his shoulder, otherwise empty-handed. He leaned to the side to check his reflection in the window. “Whew!” His eyebrows elevated to theatrical heights. “What a week, huh?”

“David,” Victor said as pleasantly as he could.

“Sir,” David said with a hint of happy sarcasm.

*Oh boy does he deserve it.* Victor bolstered his resolve while noting that David had spritzed himself with another few bucks’ worth of *Beckham*. Would there be time to wet-wipe his throat before the bite? “The Westchase report?”

“Got it right here.” David hustled back to his desk, returning on a jog. He handed Victor a file folder.

It was suspiciously light. “The bulk of it is electronic...?”

“You got a classic case of monitor strain going there.” David air-traced the stress lines around Victor’s eyes. “Your generation never evolved the ability to survive in the digital age.” He nodded at the thin folder and stuck a piece of Juicy Fruit in his mouth. “So I kept it old school for you—that’s the whole kit and kaboodle, VV.”

Two years ago, Victor Barton Thetherson was bitten by a vampire. At the time, Victor was forty-

six, possessed of a balding comb-over and sixty extra pounds, with a disrespectful, underachieving staff of accountants, a disappointed ex-wife, and a daughter who would one day be someone else's underachieving, disrespectful, disappointed employee and spouse.

Upon entering the office the next morning, Victor's physical changes made it obvious he had become a vampire. He was met with fear, excitement and wonder. But when he didn't bite anybody, when he was overheard stuttering on the phone as his boss chewed his ass for missing another deadline, it was a return to business as usual. With the addition of his new nickname, Vampire Vic.

Victor showed just a smidge of one of his fangs. After tonight, the name would have a whole different vibe.

David's hands hovered over his perfect coif like a gypsy at her crystal ball, sensing static frizz. He nodded at the can of mousse on the far corner of Victor's desk. "May I?"

"You may not." Victor opened the Westchase folder. "David, Jeez..." He caught himself in time; his boss frowned on profanity. "...geez whiz. All you have here is a few bullet points."

"Did I forget the cover page?"

"No," Victor squawked, brandishing the folder's entire contents, bullet points in one hand and cover page in the other, for David's consideration.

"I know, right?" David joined Victor in his outrage. "That was a bitch of an assignment you gave me."

"A bitch of an assignment?" Victor chirped. "The audit was done in June. This was a task you were given three weeks to complete. Followed by two one-week extensions. I could have finished this audit report in three days."

"VV, surely you jest."

Victor couldn't prevent his head from slumping against his office door frame. If he bit David now, the report would be another week late. He couldn't afford to give his boss any more ammunition. He wagged the folder. "We have to finish this tonight."

David looked puzzled. "We? Tonight?"

"David, yes, WE. Our ass is on the line. Asses."

David was clearly upset. "Let's get another extension."

"No, David, no. Jay called three times today, looking for this Westchase report. I promised him he'd have it by the end of the day."

"Why would you promise that?"

"I promised it, because this morning when I asked you if the report was almost done, you said yes."

"To be fair, you asked if I was finished, and I was."

Victor growled softly. David looked uncomfortable, fidgeting and grimacing. Was he suddenly realizing the danger he was in? Regretting this day, and his whole wasted life? Petrified at the prospect of being held captive after hours in an empty office building, with the vampire?

"I don't know if this is jock itch, or something else, but I should spray it with some Tinactin or something." David stood on tiptoes to survey Victor's desk.

"No, I don't have anything for that." Victor was recalibrating his attack. They would pull a college-esque all nighter, standing over his computer together just before dawn, both of them bleary-eyed and celebrating the satisfying click of the Send button. He would bid David adieu, and then jump him at the door to his Mini Cooper, drink him dry and send his soul to Hell. "Let's see your audit workpapers."

"They are right there, my man," said David, pointing at his desk drawer. "Don't wait for me, I'll hit the ground running as soon as I get back from the drug store."

"You're not leaving," said Victor.

"Vic, I gotta," David whined, squirming like a poorly potty-trained toddler. "I got the itch, real

bad.”

“Fine. As long as you bring me back something. We’ll eat in here while we work.”

Victor found the Westchase audit materials in David’s drawer, under a stack of fantasy baseball stat sheets and an impressive collection of more traditional fantasy mags. By 5:30 he had reorganized the paperwork to enable them to plow through in assembly line fashion. He marveled at his ingenuity and snacked on Little Debbie’s. Called David and left a voicemail.

After leaving his third voicemail and sending his sixth text message, Victor practiced his attack on the life-sized cardboard cutout of their CEO in a construction helmet. A speech balloon quoted their CEO on the cutout’s right side—“Safety breeds quality, and quality breeds success!”—forcing Victor to go left. The maneuver was ungainly; he couldn’t seem to get the angle right. He came at his CEO from behind, and felt much more comfortable.

Just after seven David strolled into the conference room and tossed his gym bag on the floor, whistling “She’ll Be Comin’ ’Round the Mountain”. While helping himself to a Little Debbie he finally noticed Victor tapping his foot. “What?” he said innocently.

“What what, you’ve been gone two hours, that’s what. I called, and I texted you several times.”

With his mouth full of snack cake: “In all the excitement, I left my phone at my desk. The time thing, I’m fully prepared to say my bad, but our waitress was slow, dude. The place is nuts during happy hour, I know, but come on...”

A pointillist blotch of pink bloomed on Victor’s pale skin. “You went to happy hour?”

“They were expecting me. You know our department—band of brothers, if someone doesn’t show, they get worried.”

“And of course you left your phone here...”

“Imagine my frustration...”

“And you’ve been drinking, haven’t you?”

“Just one. A two-for-one. And a couple jello shots with our waitress.” David chuckled, recalling the scene. “You know how they stick the shot glass between their titties and bend their necks way forward...”

“I don’t.” He didn’t. “I don’t suppose you brought back any food for me?”

“Completely spaced it out. I was a little buzzed.”

“Fine.” Better hungry, Victor decided. His blood “craving” was more like a diabetic’s sugar low, but his appetite for food could be frighteningly insatiable. For once it would work to his advantage. He opened his laptop and brought up the audit report template he was now extremely anxious to complete. “Let’s just move on this project.”

“Sounds good to me, boss.” David scratched his crotch. “Forgot the Tinactin.”

For forty minutes Victor typed, fleshing out David’s skimpy bullet point list, tallying the testing results, asking follow-up questions—motioning for David to take out his iPod ear buds, and then asking again. David spent most of the time hovering over Victor’s shoulder, providing motivating comments like *good job*, *nice work*, and *I did not see that*. Victor maintained two selves, one focusing on the business at hand, the other thrilling to what was about to finally happen.

And then they reached the end of David’s contribution to the report...

[Click here](#) to read more of Vampire Vic.