Chapter 86 Looting a Vamp Lord

I opened the door casually, but I was on high alert.  There were two young women in normal street clothes standing outside the door.  My abyssal eyes told me they had no life essence, so they were clearly vamps.  At the hallway intersection to the left were two more, and at the intersection to the right, two more.  They appeared to be waiting.  I said, “I am on vacation and I do not wish to be disturbed.  Please take your party elsewhere.”  The vamp woman leaning on the wall across the doorway snickered.

“You are in our city, and we will decide where we party,” her overconfident tone irritated me.  She demanded, “Give us Del Roy, and we may let you live.”

I didn’t see any way out of this confrontation, and although I wanted to direct my anger at Del Roy, I had to deal with this.  I scanned the six vamps out in the hallway, four lower tier 2 and two upper tier 1.  I was still missing three of the more powerful vamps that De Roy had mentioned.  I started playing with my new sphere cleansing essence.  Using it was like pulling aether to opening a portal to a transit.  The aether I channeled to open the portal to the transit ran out of my hand.  So I should be able to release the cleansing aether through my hand as well.

For me, there was no romanticism in fighting vamps.  I was no Van Hellsing.  I was also extremely nervous about the impending battle but was hiding it and showing confidence instead.  The two vamps directly across from me were both lower tier two, so if I could eliminate them quickly I would be in a much better position to deal with the rest.  As I was planning my attack pattern, a salt and pepper man in a meticulous suit came around the corner.  His beard and mustache were too perfect, and his confidence was evident.  I felt his dominating aura wash over me.  The vamps in the hallway slumped slightly under their sire’s aura.  I stood tall, ignoring the effect, and the vamp’s eyes narrowed at me.

This had to be the opposing vamp lord, as he had a lower tier 3 core in my abyssal sight.  I turned and faced him as my heart rate increased unbidden, pumping blood and adrenaline.  I suddenly started to doubt myself.  Who was I to think I could challenge a being that was a thousand years old?  I shook of the attempt of the vamp lord to make me doubt myself.  My mind suddenly cleared, and I put a nasty grin on my face, targeting the approaching lord.  Ok, fake it till you make it was my thought.

“Lord Van Holthe, I presume?  My patience has run out.  Leave with your infants, or your family will be much smaller in a few minutes,” I said with as much mennace as I could.  It felt good trying to intimidate these creatures.  I just needed Van Holthe to scan my core and back down as De Roy did once her realized I had a tier 4 core.

Unfortunately, he didn’t read my core and just said, “Kill him!”

With my focus on Van Holthe, the vamp woman across the hall lunged at me, fangs and claws out.  Her speed was impressive, but I lashed out with my hand and used my cleanse death essence ability with a strike to her chest.  She screamed, but I was already moving to my next target as the hallway erupted in movement.  They matched my speed, but all I needed was contact give them a cleansing blast.  My martial training had helped as limbs and fangs came at me.  I felt claws shred my clothes but ignored the wounds as I fought.  
  
The vamp lord had held back, waiting for his minions to bring me down.  Three of the vamps were screaming as their bodies shriveled, and one was vamp was still and completely ashen.  Wherever I had struck them, black ash sloughed off their bodies, and their limbs no longer worked as the purifying essence spread through them.  The two untouched vamps retreated behind their lord, who now had fear etched on his face.  His eyes went bloodshot as he read my core.  I would say he paled, but his skin tone was already ivory-white.

I had committed to the fight, and now I needed to make sure no one escaped…well, I needed to make sure the lord didn’t escape.  I charged at him fearlessly, and his body dissipated into smoke.  I channeled my cleanse ability to my hand and just released it into the cloud as I passed through it.  I heard a thunk as I rolled on the floor and came up facing the cloud.

The vamp lord was now solid and was picking himself off the ground with an ashen face.  “I surrender,” he started to say, but I ignored him and charged.  The close quarter combat was intense.  He was faster than me and was brandishing claws he had grown from his fingers.  I channeled a steady flow of cleansing aura into my hands.  When he blocked me, or I struck him, I bled more and more of the aura into him.  I got distracted in focusing on my fight with the vamp lord.  I was wrapped up from behind as a vamp wrapped its legs and arms around me and sunk its fangs into my neck.

I punched the vamp in the face.  The vamp’s face crumbled under the aura-laced punch, only leaving behind its fangs.  I felt my neck andt with my fingers and pulled out the two fangs.  They had barely penetrated my skin, and the vamp had only been upper tier 1, not a threat, just a distraction.  Lord Van Holthe had taken the time to limp further down the corridor, helped by two other vamps.  I rushed down the corridor and leaped at the vamp lord, striking him in the back of the head and finishing him off as the strike beheaded his weakened body.

His two progeny that had been helping him cowered in fear as their lord slowly turned to ash.  I had destroyed their sire, who was vastly stronger than them. They now recognized me as the apex predator.  I would have to thank Andromeda now for the gift even if it was unpleasant to revive it.  I walked to the two vamps and grabbed the collar of one who wisely didn’t resist.

I planned to filter the cleanse into her and end her but found my aether was empty.  I stumbled a bit realizing I was tapped out before saying, “Both of you into the room.”  My tone was a command, and they slinked themselves into the room.  Inside the room, I found Maya and Artica at the bathroom door with Lord De Roy standing unsteadily and facing the window where four vamps stood on the ledge.  The vamps outside had been there to prevent the retreat and were not expecting their lord to have lost in the hallway.

I had swaggered confidently as I entered the room behind the two vamps.  I was bleeding from a half dozen cuts that I didn’t remember receiving, but none had reached deep enough to cut muscle.  The trickle of blood from the wounds had stopped, and the wounds were already closing.  I tried to look stoic as I pointed to the two chairs in the room for the two vamps from the corridor to take.  The four at the window scattered into the night after reading the situation.  Lord De Roy was still confused, “Is Van Holthe on the run as well?”

“No, he has been purged,”  I said without humor.  My adrenaline settled, and I realized I had been outnumbered and won against a vampire coven.  I wouldn’t have believed it possible a few months ago.

Lord De Roy hobbled to the corridor to confirm my assertions.  He returned a minute later.  “You cleansed their cores?  How?  What type of demon are you?”

My hard gaze at the vamp lord shut up him up but it was too late.  Maya asked, “He called you a demon?”  I saw Artica pull Maya close and whisper in her ear.  I would have liked to know what she said because Maya’s eyes went wide.

I focused on De Roy, “Can you handle the cleanup?”  I said, indicating the two vamps.

Both fell to their knees and bowed before De Roy.  My translation ring told me what they we saying in Dutch, “We offer our blood freely in return for your protection.  We offer our bodies to serve as your shield.  We offer our minds for you to direct.”

William De Roy nodded, “I accept your pledge, and we can do the rites in private.  If you betray me before then I will end your bloodlines.”  He turned toward me.  “What should I call you?”

I didn’t hesitate, “Lord Apollyon.”  I figured I might as well be consistent.  Apollyon was my cover with the Magus Arcanum.

“Lord Apollyon…” he tested the name.  My hard look kept him from asking questions.  He stood, “I am going to bind these two to me and heal up before purging the rest of Van Holthe’s coven.”  The two cowed vamps twitched, and one spoke meekly.

“Lord De Roy, we can convince them to serve,”  it was a pleading tone for mercy.

They didn’t see De Roy’s self-satisfied grin, “After you are bound to me, I will give them one chance.  If they don’t bow immediately, their lives are forfeit.”  After the vamps left, William De Roy said, “I will repay you for this.”

I felt exhausted.  I understood why he had come here.  He had nothing to lose.  He was going to be slain, so why not drag his enemies in front of a powerful being and hope for the best?  My anger at him was hidden as he departed, but I would have also cleansed De Roy if I was not completely out of aether.  I decided at that moment I hated vamps.

I closed the door and looked at Artica and Maya.  Maya looked apprehensive, and Artica looked smug like she knew the entire time I would win.  I asked, “Are you two ok?”  Maya nodded, and Artica asked me a question.

“You know I am supposed to be the bodyguard here,” she chuckled.  “I have never seen vamps so terrified in my life.  You were not kidding about fighting them alone.”

I felt my neck where the fangs had broke my skin.  It was healed and smooth now.  I asked, “I am not going to become a vampire now, am I?  One of them bit my neck.”

Artica shook her head no, “They need to cycle most our your blood through their body and inject it back into you.  It takes about fifteen minutes.”  I had my *discern truth* ability active it rang affirmative.  So that was how my new ability worked.  If someone told me something, I would know if they thought the statement was true.  Since it was just a lower tier 1 skill, it wouldn’t work on anyone who had a mental defense as it relied on reading their mind.  Artica obviously had no defenses.  This was good.

I asked Artica, “What did you tell Maya about my nature?”

Maya looked uncomfortable, and Artica just grinned, “I told her you were good demon.”

Maya still looked a little fearful of me.  She had thought I was just a powerful human mage, and now I was a demon, a race that lived on the higher layers.  I didn’t know how much to tell her.  The demon was out of the bag, but was she trustworthy?  I finally said, “I am still Caleb, Paige’s brother.  I contracted myself to a higher demon.  She changed me into her image.  I didn’t kill Caleb and replace him.”

Maya looked uncertain, and Artica tried to help the situation, “He hasn’t forced me into bondage or anything.  He is a good demon!  He made me stronger and didn’t require anything from me in return.”

I thought it best not to mention I had, in fact, purchased Articas’s contract from Jade.  So Artica, was in fact contracted to me.   Maya asked, “Does Paige know?”

I closed my eyes.  Paige would figure it out.  After all it was Paige, and Abigail would probably say something to give up my secret by mistake, if she hadn’t already.  I replied, “No, but she knows about aether magic and that I have powers.”

Maya seemed somewhat accepting.  “What type of demon are you?”  Shit.  I was hoping she wouldn’t ask.  Artica was now focused on me as well, anticipating my answer.  There were dozens of different breeds of demons.  When I looked conflicted on whether to tell her, Maya added, “I don’t mind if your demon form isn’t humanoid.  I would just like to know.”  My *discern truth* rang true on Maya’s statement.

Artica wanted to know, too, by her intense gaze.  I asked Artica, “What about you?  Are you ok serving any type of demon?”

I focused my *discern truth* spell on Artica as she spoke, “Well, you have to be a greater demon or demon lord based on your power, and if I am correct, you are an incubus.  Which I can totally get behind…or better yet in front of.”  Her later comment was obvious innuendo for sex.  She was turning into a bit of a nymphomaniac.

“Yes, I am an incubus.”  Joy and excitement were on Artica’s face as I confirmed it.  Disbelief played on Maya’s face.

Maya stuttered, “Don’t incubi suck out your life force through carnal acts?”

I stood and waved my hands, “No!”  Then thought, “Well, yes.  But we can control it.  I monitor everything during sex and increase my partner’s strength.  I can prove it!  What was your aether core before we had sex the first time?”  I pulled off my bracelet and gave it to Artica to use on Maya.

Maya noticed the device and said, “1.082 before I started college.  It might have increased to 1.083, but that is unlikely.” Artica turned the device on Maya, got a reading, and showed it to her.  She took it and was stunned.  “That is not possible,” Maya whispered.  Artica was bouncing in excitement at Maya’s disbelief.

“And that is not all!  He also made you stronger!  That is why you have been so hungry,” Artica said excitedly.  Well, at least Artica seemed to like Maya.  She wanted Maya to accept me as I was.

I scratched the back of my head, “Yeah, I did that and improved your endurance as well.  You should have felt something when I, umm, finished last night.  I don’t know how the…elixir…works, but it optimizes your physiology.”  Maya’s eyes went wide in realization.  Others had told me they felt the changes as it was absorbed.

Maya sat down processing, and Artica was still acting excited.  I think she was too happy to be working for a demon.  Well, I had been able to subdue a vamp lord with relative ease.  Artica respected power.  Maya stood, “I think I am going to go.  Um, thank you, I guess.”  I wasn’t sure if I should stop her.

I asked, “Maya are you going to tell anyone?” She looked slightly fearful.  I tried to appear unthreatening by smiling but I don’t think it helped.

Maya paused, “No.  I will not tell anyone.  I promise,” my truth ability said she was speaking the truth.  At least the truth at this point in time.  She might change her mind.

I said, “Maya, call me anytime if you want to talk.  I am sorry if I did anything wrong.”  She nodded that she heard me and quickly left.

I muttered that I hoped this was not going to be a problem.  I looked at Artica, who was smiling, “I knew it when Lord De Roy was afraid of you and called you a demon lord.  I am yours, Caleb.  I will be your loyal guardian.”  My ability rang that she was speaking her truth.

I looked at Artica, and she added, “I realized I wanted to be tamed, Caleb.  When I understood how powerful you actually were—strength above all else.”

I could only accept Artica’s loyalty.  It felt better than if I had coerced it.  I had earned it with battle tonight.  I was mulling over my thoughts, and Artica continued, “Don’t worry.  She will come around once she realizes the gifts you have given her.  I can already feel my increased fitness and my strength is normalizing.  And now that she has left, I have you to myself tonight.”  Artica tried to tackle me to the bed as a joke by didn’t have enough mass to move me.

“No sex tonight.  I want to stay on alert tonight because of the vamps,” I said to her disappointment.  “But I do need a shower.  Can you clean my back?”

After an enjoyable shower where Artica washed my front and back, I remained on alert while Artica slept.  In the morning, we joined my parents for breakfast.  It was New Year’s Eve, December 31st, so my parents wanted to know what I planned to do tonight.  Artica pulled out two tickets for a club in the city hosting a party for the college-age crowd.  My parents just told us to be careful when we went.  They were a little disappointed as I was flying home tomorrow night, and we had barely spent any time together.  It hadnt felt like a family vacation.

At least it looked like they had fun with each other.  I reassured them I had a great time and learned a lot of history and culture on this vacation.  I knew my mother would start teaching her new class of pharmaceutical sales reps tomorrow.  Mostly pretty women recruited from across Europe.  Being pretty with a foreign accent usually worked well well in convincing young doctors.

Artica and I spent the day in my room, and just after lunch Lord De Roy knocked.  Artica let him in.  “Lord Apollyon, I have tied up all the loose ends.  I have come to beg for your forgiveness and to offer you compensation for dragging you into my mess.”

Sitting across from him at the tiny table in my room, I gestured for him to continue, “Lord Van Holthe had an estate south of the city.  It is yours with its entire contents.”  I didn’t look impressed because I didn’t ever plan to return to Amsterdam.  He added, “Lord Van Holfe’s art collection is worth tens of millions.  He has over twelve thousand bottles in his wine cellar worth more than a million and an impressive collection of vehicles.”  I was suddenly much more interested.

I remembered that the wine cellar in my cabin had space for 720 bottles, 12 racks of 60.  I locked eyes with William De Roy, “So you are giving me the spoils of the opponent I defeated?”  He squirmed in his seat under my stare, and I finally said, “I will tour the estate this afternoon, and you can ship everything I want to my storage unit in the United States.  You can then sell everything else, including the estate and send me the funds.”

He nodded, “Persephone can drive you now if you wish.  She is waiting outside.”  I nodded and stood.

Artica and I got into a new Bentley sedan outside the hotel.  I assumed De Roy had arrived in it, and it was extremely luxurious.  I checked on my phone, and it cost $254,000 new.  I asked Persephone, who was driving, if this was De Roy’s ride.  She admitted it was Van Holthe’s.  I smiled and told her it was one of the things I wished to send to the States.  I had a three-car garage at the cabin where it could be stored.

When we got to the estate, there was an impressive collection of cars in a massive garage.  Six Bentleys, all in immaculate condition, we’re the pride of the collection.  I was going to need a larger garage at the cabin.  I selected two other vehicles to be shipped and told her she could sell the rest.  Thankfully they drove on the right side of the road in Amsterdam.

Persephone followed us as we walked through the house.  I told her the entire library could be sent and sent a text to Amelia to add more shelving to the study room at my cabin.  The entire wine cellar, which looked to have more than twelve thousand bottles, could be packed in crates and sent as well.  Artica pointed out multiple pieces of furniture she liked, the entire game room with a snooker and billiards table, and we continued through the fifteen bedrooms on the expansive estate.  Although the estate had a stale smell, it was quite beautiful.  I almost considered keeping it, but then I would have to return to vamp territory, and that was off the table.  For now I would settle with looting one if the three richest vamps in the country.

Persephone handed me the list of insured artwork.  I was no art connoisseur, but I thought donating it all to a museum might be best.  Some of the art was probably stolen anyway.  Well, they could give it back to the true owners.  Lord De Roy arrived after a few hours, and although he was not too happy to lose the brand-new Bentley he eagerly helped me go through the estate again so I didn’t miss anything of value.

He showed me the hidden passage to the hibernation room of Van Holthe.   Next to an elaborate wooden coffin was a titanium coffin filled with thousands of pieces of gold bullion from the last twelve hundred years.  I tried to contain my excitement but still ran my fingers through the coins and bars.  I told him to package and ship it all.  On another series of shelves were ancient pocket watches.  The vamp lord must have had a fetish for timepieces.  I counted over a hundred and asked for them all to be included in the shipment.  William De Roy was patient, and I figured I was going to need a larger house by everything I was asking to be shipped.

It would all come in six 40’ long steel shipping containers by Persephone’s initial estimations.  I had Artica work to set up a climate-controlled warehouse to hold the containers when they arrived until we could move things to my cabin house.   Shipping the books, wine and some other items was going to require special shipping containers as well.  De Roy promised to send someone with the ship,ent to make sure it arrived safe.

It was quickly approaching midnight, and Artica reminded me of the party.  We left the estate and changed into clean clothes, only to get there fifteen minutes before the New Year.  It was still loud and fun.  I started dancing with a stranger who was obviously drunk.  She had selected me to be her New Year kiss as she dragged me to her lips at midnight.  I complied and returned the long kiss.  I wondered where Artica had wandered off to.  This woman didn’t let me go.

She had her hands in my pants and was inviting me back to her place.  I checked my phone and there was a text from Artica.

***Got your back—satisfy your incubus needs.***

 The woman looked desperate for sex.  She promised to make my night enjoyable.  She had a weak core.  My bracelet read 0.12.  Well, I could use her to harvest regular life essence and not strengthen her core.   I was empty of aether and needed to replenish.   I looked again for Artica and spotted her watching me.  She had changed her hair to black and smirked when I spotted her.  I let the young woman drag me to her student apartment, knowing Artica would follow.

She had two roommates who had just returned as well in the living room.  One asked her where her boyfriend was, and I suddenly understood.  This was some type of revenge sex for her.  Well, I was doing her a service then.

Four hours later, of raucous sex and pounding, I had harvested 48 essence after giving her a gift of my memory seed as a thank you.  I never even got her name as I left her sprawled on her bed well used and smelling strongly of sex.  I opened the door to find her roommate in the small living room.  She was covered by a blanket and had been listening to me service her roommate and she masturbating under the blanket by the smell in this room.  She wasn’t as attractive as her roommate, but I asked if she wanted to go to her room.  She obviously wanted to say yes but shook her head no, too shy to accept.  I told her it was her loss and left the apartment.

Artica was outside, “How did it go?”  She asked as we walked to her hotel.

“Good.  I got a good harvest, and she will always remember the best sex of her life.”  I sounded like an incubus.  It was true.  With the perfect recall I had given her, she would remember all the details of this evening with her half a dozen powerful body shaking orgasms.  I even checked her core after, and it had ticked up to only 0.13, so just a one hundredth increase for four hours of using steady doses of saliva.  I could use my adjacent vortex method to replenish my aether without increasing cores.

I asked Artica, “Where do you want to go?”

Artica immediately said, “Puccini’s Chocolates.”