

DARIUS
A VAMPIRE STORY

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**DARIUS -
A VAMPIRE STORY**

By R Shannon



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White Gothic Publishing
Ocala, FL



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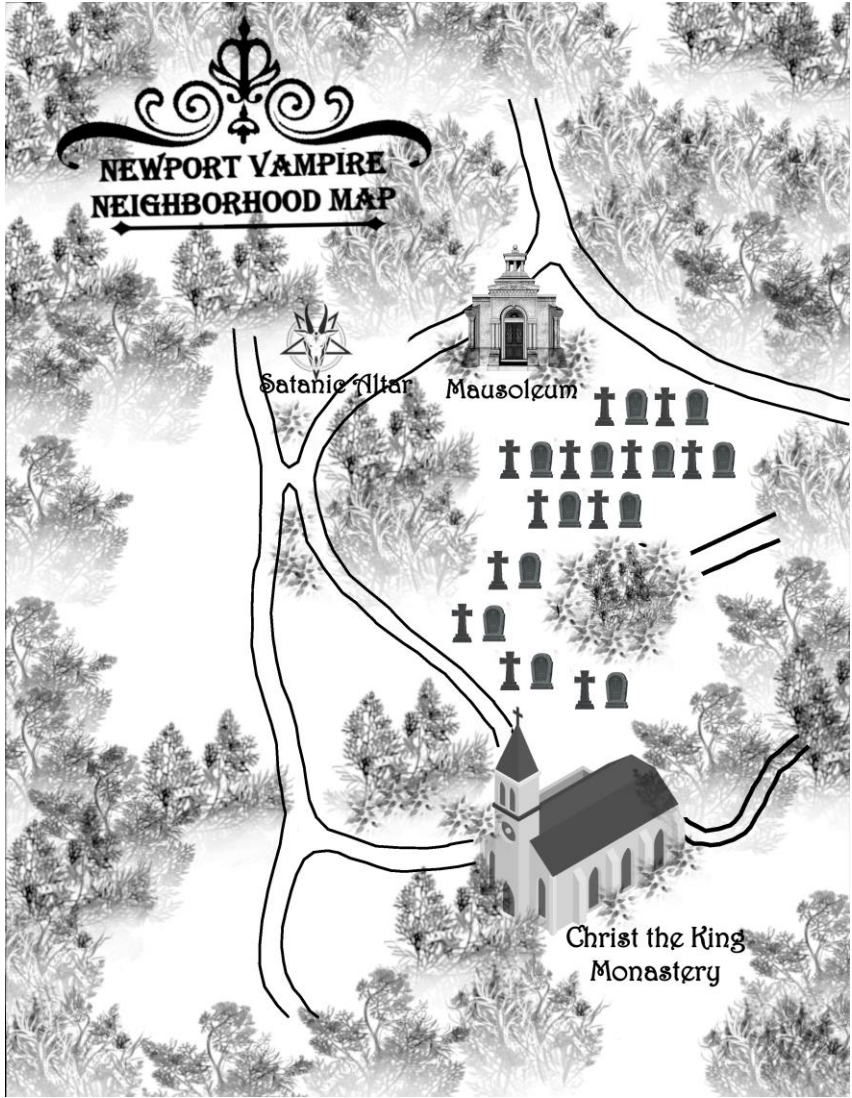
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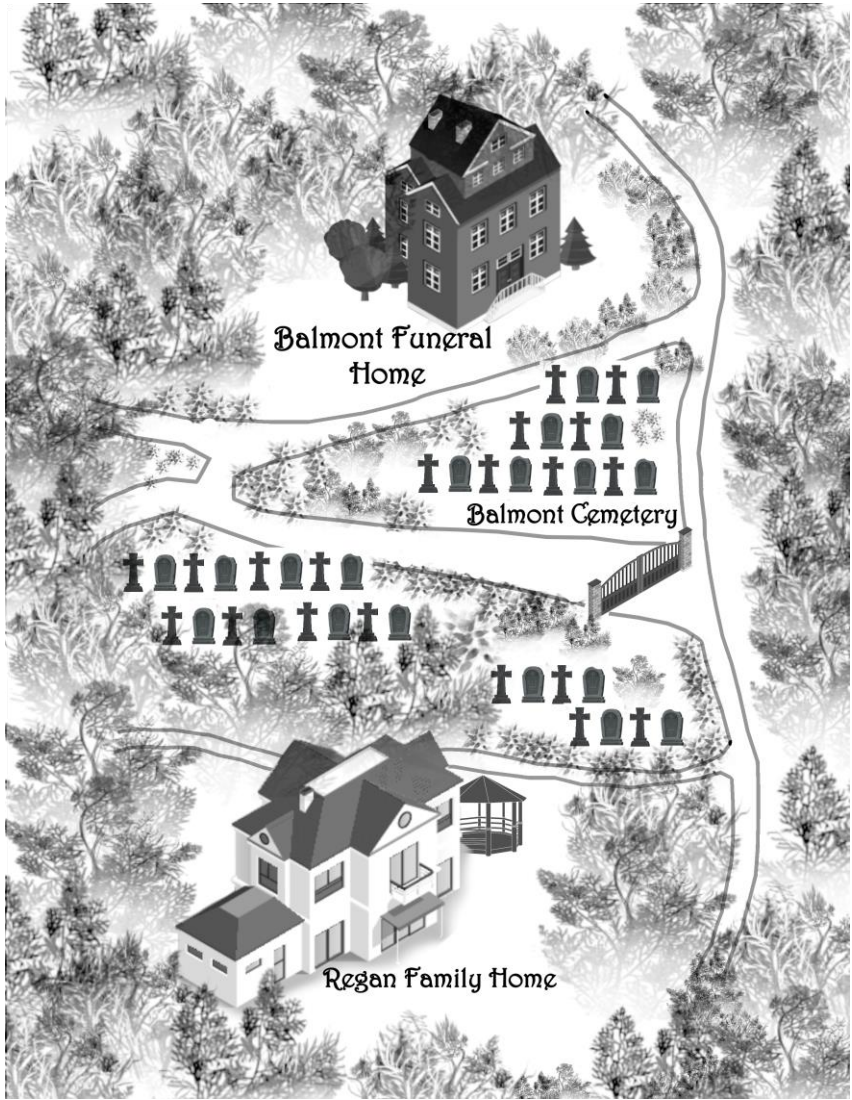
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CHAPTER 1

IT WAS NINE-THIRTY AT NIGHT, pitch dark and the wind was howling. A storm was showing threatening signs on the horizon. It was September in Rhode Island and the temperature was only sixty degrees. This was considered barely chilly in the northeast. Charlie drove the company hearse to the back of the cemetery away from any street lighting. Darius exited the passenger side of the hearse. As Charlie turned off the car and its headlights, he came around to the back of the hearse. As Darius opened the back doors, Charlie reached in and pulled out a shovel, a rake and a pail. Darius reached back inside and pulled out a rolled blanket. He put it over his shoulder. He reached back inside and gathered Megan's limp body in his arms. Charlie was not engaging Darius in any eye contact. Neither of them spoke. Charlie wasn't able to look at his boss since Megan died four hours earlier.

“Where did you bury Mrs. Jones this morning?” whispered Darius.

“Over here,” whispered Charlie. A slight drizzle began. If they timed it right, they would finish burying Megan before the harder rain came.

“Here it is, Darius,” whispered Charlie. He dropped his bucket at the side of the burial site. Using his shovel, he carefully dug up and set aside a large part of the new sod that covered the fresh burial plot. The grave diggers buried Mrs. Jones eight hours earlier so the dirt would be easy to dig up.

Usually Charlie was a nervous wreck when Darius got him involved in his cover-ups. For some reason, tonight his mood was more despondent and resolved. This was not the first time Darius had overfed and killed one of ‘his girls’ as he sometimes referred to them. Charlie was also on Xanax tonight so that could have accounted for his unusual calmness.

With the sod now removed, Charlie began to dig. The fresh dirt was almost as easy as digging in sand. Digging enough room to place Megan next to Mrs. Jones' coffin was easy enough. What made it hard was Darius not keeping the light where Charlie needed it. He wouldn't dare say anything as Darius could be temperamental at times like this. Darius put the

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flashlight down on the ground and wrapped Megan in the blanket he brought. Charlie continued to dig as best he could in the darkness keeping his thoughts to himself. *'I have got to get away from this guy. He's completely out of control.'*

As Charlie dug enough space to fit Megan into the hole, he stopped and moved aside. Darius picked Megan up in his arms, kissed her on her forehead, and passed her to Charlie. She was only five foot five and weighed no more than a hundred pounds. By passing Megan to him, Charlie knew Darius was having trouble facing what he did. Megan's death was a tragic accident, but it was still at the hands of Darius.

Charlie bent down and laid Megan into the grave. He used as much care and respect as could be used when illegally burying your boss' latest murder victim. Although technically, it was probably manslaughter. Maybe the dignity for Megan's burial was a residue of the Catholic schools he attended. Or maybe it was his Christian grandmother hurling scriptures at him for every occasion when growing up. In any event, it was one shred of humanity that still clung to him after meeting Darius. Darius had pulled him into a world of darkness he never knew existed. And Charlie was a seasoned criminal before falling into Darius' trap.

"Darius, she'll probably rise in a day or two. What then?" whispered Charlie.

"I'll be taking possession of the crematorium within a week, so I can take care of her when that happens."

"What about in the meantime?" asked Charlie.

"Just cover her up, Charlie. Let me do all the worrying. I've protected you so far, haven't I?" asked Darius, raising his voice.

"Yes, Darius, you have." Charlie tossed the dirt back into the grave covering Megan up.

"So don't worry about anything. She may take a few days to rise and, in the meantime, I'll push the sale of the crematorium through as quickly as I can."

"Okay, Darius," said Charlie. Once he filled the grave site, he laid the shovel down. He picked up the sod pieces and laid them in place.

"I'll keep my eyes open in the cemetery and the woods as I go walking," said Darius. "Hopefully, she will take time to recognize her full strength and desire." Darius glared at Charlie and waited for him to finish.

Charlie walked on top of the sod, pressing it down until it looked exactly the same as when they arrived.

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Darius checked his watch and it was only two o'clock in the morning. They drove back to the funeral home in silence. Charlie went to bed and Darius went out walking, like he did most nights.



CHAPTER 2

HIS GRANDMOTHER MADE his favorite meal, Chicken Parmesan, to wish John-Luke well on his long journey which would begin in the morning. John-Luke knew saying good-bye to his mother and grandmother was going to be hard, but he was feeling more emotional than he expected.

“I think you may be acting too quickly, John-Luke. Why don’t you take advantage of the master’s scholarship you’re been offered first. Then you can test your calling,” said his mother, Diane. “It’s not too late. You can call the monastery now and cancel.”

“You made it through school but you haven’t given yourself a chance to test the real world yet,” said Grandma Sandra. She placed the food onto the table for the three of them. Through his school years, they were his biggest supporters. Grammar school was hard enough, but high school and college were even worse. Sometimes he was treated like an outcast. Other times he was ignored completely. Either way, he felt invisible most of his life. He graduated college one month ago. He felt like he had been paroled from prison. His Christian faith had sustained him all during those difficult years. He wasn’t happy, but he had the peace and joy of Christ and he survived it.

They were double-teaming him and he was touched by it. He knew they had his best intentions in mind. John-Luke’s school years were brutal because he was extremely smart, quiet, and serious-minded. To say he didn’t fit in anywhere in that world would be an understatement. His grandmother knew he was closer to her than anyone else in the world. But even she felt he was moving too quickly in entering the monastery.

“I’m going to the monastery and will discern my call for the three months between now and the time I need to accept or reject the scholarship. I’ve accepted the scholarship and I can always cancel if I decide to stay with the brothers,” said John-Luke. “This is the time for me to do this.”

“I’m relieved to hear that. So go there and get it out of your system,” said his mother. John-Luke knew she wanted grandchildren and if he chose the

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priesthood or the brotherhood, that would end her own family dreams. But he knew he had to find his own way in the world. If his father had not run off years ago, he could have gotten an adult male's perspective on things, but that was not to be.

His grandmother peppered their dinner conversation with tips on avoiding the monks' pressure to sign up too soon. "They have shortages of brothers so they will be coming at you like used car salesmen," said Sandra. "You have to be ready for them."

He finished his dinner, kissed the two most important women in his life good-bye and went to bed. His day and a half bus and train journey from Florida to Newport, Rhode Island would begin very early in the morning.



Patrick Regan sat with his wife, Elizabeth, in their Newport Rhode Island estate home. This estate home had been inherited from three generations of Regans before them. They were sitting in the drawing room, which was a throw-back to another era. They were called great rooms in newer homes, but the Regans were steeped in old world traditions and it would always be a drawing room to them. They were part of the dying breed of pedigreed blue bloods who still ruled the northeast. These traditions still meant something to them and their ilk. The whole *blue blood thing*, as some called it, was fading all around their world. But the Regans were among what was left of the old-world money in Newport. They were clinging to what was left of their kingdom with white knuckles.

"Patrick, we are going to have to help Ciara meet someone as I am seeing signs of jealousy and depression in her," said Elizabeth. She always tried to catch him before the third or fourth brandy, as he could be too sarcastic and unpredictable by then.

"I think we should leave her alone. She seems happy to me, Elizabeth. Both of our daughters have told us to stop trying to fix them up," said Patrick.

"So you want your daughter to marry that scoundrel she brought around last week?"

"No, I certainly do not. In light of that scoundrel, I see your point. But you're talking about Genevieve. She has no trouble meeting young men. I thought you were talking about Ciara," said Patrick frowning.

"We have to worry about both of them. Ciara is too quiet and reserved to meet anyone on her own. She has finished college and she never had as much as one boyfriend. I think she needs our help."

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"Who do you have in mind?" asked Patrick.

"The Langleys have two boys, Lawrence and Andrew. Either of them would be wonderful, but I think we should focus on Lawrence because he's quiet too. Andrew is outgoing and I noticed in church that he's quite popular with the girls. Lawrence is more reserved, like Ciara," said Elizabeth. "I've been watching them on Sundays for about two months now."

"What is my part in this scheme?" asked Patrick.

"I want you to ask Douglas Langley, the father, if his son Lawrence has a girlfriend, that's all," said Elizabeth.

"That's easy enough, but if I sign onto this scheme with you, what else will I have to do? What kind of small print do I have to worry about?"

"Nothing. You will have to serve drinks at any dinner his mother and I plan," said Elizabeth.

"That's all? There's no hidden step three that you're holding back?"

"No, that's it. It's easy and simple," said Elizabeth, smirking.

"Okay. I'll find out if Lawrence has a girlfriend. I guess if he has a girlfriend, you want me to ask about Andrew?" asked Patrick, as he took another sip of brandy.

"Exactly. You're a natural. I knew I could count on you, Patrick."

"Consider it done."



CHAPTER 3

BY THE TIME HE ENTERED what was now his fourth train, John-Luke had been traveling for a day and a half already. This would be the last leg of the journey. He entered the Amtrak train and walked a few rows back, saw a section where only one man sat. He entered the section and sat down with his knapsack and smiled at the man across from him. The man did not smile back. He looked into John-Luke's eyes and then looked away slowly. John-Luke confirmed it was definitely a sneer, given with a sense of delight and glee.

The man appeared European by his facial bone structure. He was tall, thin and handsome. He had a full head of slicked-back dark brown hair and blue eyes. John-Luke guessed he was probably from somewhere in Eastern Europe. He couldn't tell the man's age. He could be in his late twenties or he could be in his mid-forties. It was impossible to tell. There was an agelessness about him.

His dress and manner seemed foreign as well. John-Luke could tell the man was ignoring him on purpose as their knees were only about a foot apart. John-Luke was trying to think of how he would describe this guy if he had to. The word that came to him was *dapper*. The word itself was dated and so was the guy's wardrobe. He wore a black suit, a white shirt, and a black and white print ascot with a gold and diamond tie pin. The pièce de résistance that set the whole ensemble back in time was the black cape. It was resting loosely around his shoulders. He held his fedora in his lap. He also wore two gold rings on his right hand and a small gold bracelet. Yes, dapper was the right word.

After about ten minutes, John-Luke removed his black overcoat exposing his monk's robe and a cross pendant. Abbot Rene sent him the monk habit for his trip up to the monastery as part of his welcoming package. At the moment his coat came off, the dapper guy sneered. He also suddenly changed his seat to the four-seat section directly across the aisle from John-Luke.

He joined three young women who had been sitting and talking together. This was not John-Luke's first anti-Christian look and it probably wouldn't be his last. Maybe Abbot Rene wanted him to get the full effect of being a cleric in today's world. He ignored what he took to be a snub and decided to read.

The dapper guy became charming and animated around the girls. They were giggling after everything he said. John-Luke watched as his ego inflated and he took it all in. *'Why can't I be more social? Why am I so quiet or tongue-tied around women? I'm supposed to be giving up women soon, so why am I even thinking about this?'* He again tried to read.

The social skills of this strange man continued to distract John-Luke from his book. This covert surveillance continued for another ten minutes when suddenly the train stopped. John-Luke looked up and recognized this as his stop, Newport, Rhode Island. Glancing over at the strange man as he put on his coat, their eyes met. The strange man pulled a coin out of his pocket and flipped it high into the air with his thumb. On the way down, the coin stopped in mid-air for one split second of time before it continued to fall. As he caught the coin, he smirked at John-Luke, turned and left the train, laughing on his way out. The girls followed him like he was the pied piper.

With a science degree, John-Luke knew the coin stopping in midair was impossible, but he saw it with his own eyes. It had to have been some kind of black magic. Maybe this guy was a magician. That would explain the weird outfit.



The train had been temperature-controlled and comfortable. John-Luke was not expecting the forty-five-degree gust of wind that snapped at him as he exited the train station. It was 9:30 at night and already dark. He was about ten blocks from the monastery. He decided to walk as he had been sitting since his journey began earlier yesterday. It felt good to stretch and walk. The wind was howling and the coldness had a damp bite to it. Living in Florida all his life, this was a new sensation.

Following the GPS on his cell phone, he turned left at the corner of Main Street. He walked down a side road heading in the direction of the monastery. He walked along the road with an old cemetery on his left and a cobblestone road on his right. He supposed the dapper magician was dressed for this section of town. There were old oak trees all along the inside cemetery surrounded by tall black iron fencing. The wind was still howling.

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He heard several dogs barking in the background. The whole scene looked like a movie set.

As he kept walking, a few crows cawed and flew quite close to him. He knew crows cawing at night was a sign of danger. He looked around but didn't see anything. The crows sat together on the cemetery fence and he could have sworn they were watching him as he passed.

He walked along the sidewalk next to the cemetery fence. The further down the side road he walked, the darker it became. There were fewer and fewer streetlights. The moonlight allowed him some level of visibility, but not much. It still felt good to be walking. He breathed in the cold air and watched the condensation coming out of his mouth. He heard a twig snap close by. It sounded like it came from inside the cemetery fencing. Then he heard a rustling of leaves.

He stopped and looked inside the cemetery squinting to see what it was. He heard one of the crows caw again. Off at a slight distance, but unmistakable, he saw a woman with piercing eyes. He could see her eyes more than the rest of her. As she came closer to the iron fence, she smiled slowly. At first she appeared sweet and innocent. He could see her lips parting into this sweet smile and the white of her teeth peaked out. Her hair was big and disheveled but maybe that was the style around here.

As she came closer and into the moonlight, John-Luke could feel a sense of desperation emanating from her. It was unmistakable. She quickly reached her arm through the fence and grabbed his forearm. He instinctively pulled away from her but felt a strength beyond her size and weight. Her nails had torn his outer coat sleeve into a few shreds, almost like a bear or an animal with talons. He had to use all his strength to pull away from her grip. He instinctively moved away from the fence and closer to the street. While still looking at her, she parted her lips into more of a smile and he saw long vampire-like incisors.

Picking up his pace, he walked along the curb. He could feel the adrenaline rushing through his system. His heart beat faster and his pulse rate went up. A fight or flight reaction was triggered by what he saw. The incisors looked real but the scientist in him knew there was no such thing as vampires.

As he continued walking along the curb, he heard more rustling of leaves. He opened his cell phone and ordered an Uber ride. Maybe tonight was not such a good night for a walk in the night air after all. As he waited for a few cars to pass to cross the street, he continued watching the woman inside the cemetery. She kept going in and out of the moonlight. She seemed to walk back several feet from the iron fence, but he could see her still moving in his

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direction. He felt hunted by her. Suddenly, a gloved hand reached around from behind her and covered her mouth. She managed to utter one tiny shriek but was then silenced by the gloved hand. She was then dragged back into the shadows. He watched it all with unbelieving eyes.



His Uber ride showed up and he jogged across the street and got into the back seat. He hoped he would be re-entering reality at the same time. "Christ the King Monastery."

"I know where that is," said the Uber driver. "Are you one of the monks?"

"I'm not a monk yet. I'm going there to discern whether I want to be a priest or a monk. I guess you can say I'm not one hundred percent sure."

"Cool. My aunt is a nun. She lives in Florida in a convent down there," said the Uber guy.

"That's wonderful. The Lord needs priests and nuns." John-Luke was calming down. He felt reoriented back in the real world, not to mention glad to be out of the wind and the biting cold.

"I guess he does. I used to go to church but I fell away. Life's too busy, you know?"

"Life is very busy. I just had a scare outside that cemetery," said John-Luke.

"Some people say that cemetery is haunted. But some say there's a bunch of goth kids that do weird scary stuff, so who knows. Hopefully, you'll be safe in the monastery," said the Uber guy, who looked in the rear-view mirror waiting for a laugh. None came.

The Uber driver dropped John-Luke off at a mansion. After handing the driver a tip, John-Luke got out and approached the front doors. He wasn't expecting such a luxurious mansion. He reached up and knocked using the metal lion's head knocker. Nothing. Right before he knocked a second time, the Uber driver left. He stood there *thinking 'What would the monks be doing that they can't answer the door?'*

He texted his mother and grandmother *'I arrived safely. Call you both when I can.'* He didn't know when he would get a chance to call or text them. He had no idea what the rules would be about cell phones or anything else.

John-Luke knocked again, this time a bit harder. The door opened wide and there stood a beautiful young woman. She had long blond hair that had that Kim-Kardashian long wavy style to it. Her big blue eyes opened wide

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and she said, "Are you a new monk? I've never seen you before." John-Luke was speechless.

Another attractive brunette woman in her forties came up behind her and took over. "Genevieve, invite the young man in. Come in out of the cold. I'm Elizabeth Regan and this is my daughter, Genevieve."

"Is this Christ the King Monastery?" asked John-Luke.

"Well, it's not exactly the monastery but the monastery is on our property, behind the main house. Come in and sit down for a moment."

"I'm John-Luke Cullen." He shook hands with both women.

"Have you been assigned to this monastery?" asked Mrs. Regan.

"I'm coming for a period of discernment," said John-Luke, as he saw Genevieve still looking at him.

"You're too young and handsome to enter the monastery. You should run and save yourself," said Genevieve as she smirked.

John-Luke smiled and he could feel himself blushing. He wasn't used to the amount of female attention he had gotten in the last twenty minutes. He could barely handle it. He tried to get a grip on himself.

"My cousin Rene is the abbot there. Let me call him and he can have one of the brothers come up and walk you back. It can be a bit booby-trapped in the dark." Elizabeth picked up the phone in the large reception room and called over to her cousin, Abbot Rene.

"Come in and have a quick brandy before they fully imprison you. I'm Patrick Regan, Elizabeth's husband and Genevieve's father." He walked John-Luke into the drawing room and John-Luke agreed to the brandy. Normally he would pass. But after seeing what appeared to be a vampiress, and now this beautiful woman, he went for the brandy.

"That would be great. It was a long journey. I took buses and trains up here from Florida," said John-Luke. Genevieve had followed them into the drawing room. She walked along with her father. She was including herself in the conversation between her dad and John-Luke. She was looking him up and down and he could feel it.

"That is quite a trip. You may need two brandies." He handed the half-filled brandy snifter to John-Luke who took it and gulped half of it down.

"Now there's a man who likes a good brandy," said Patrick.

"Thank you, that felt good." He glanced at Genevieve and he wanted to say something, but of course he was tongue-tied. But with her, it didn't seem to matter.

"How old are you?" she asked.

"I'm 24. How old are you?"

"I'm 21. I would love to visit Florida."

"Okay, Genevieve. That's enough flirting with the new monk," said Patrick.

"Who's flirting? I'm being friendly and cordial." He could tell she was hamming it up as she spoke.

Patrick said, "What can I say? She's impossible. God gives us all a cross to bear and mine is Genevieve."

"I don't know what you could be talking about," said Genevieve still performing for John-Luke.

John-Luke smiled at Genevieve. He knew his attraction to her showed through. He felt her dad's curiosity triggered by his interest.

Patrick made small talk with John-Luke and Genevieve for about five minutes. John-Luke heard the doorbell ring again. A moment later, Abbot Rene entered the room with Elizabeth. "Brother John, I'm so glad you made it. I know you had a long trip here." They shook hands. "I see you've met the family?"

"Yes, they have been very welcoming. The Uber driver brought me here instead of the monastery."

"It happens all the time. Luckily, I'm related to the family. They are almost our official welcoming committee. Thank you, Elizabeth."

"Thank you for the brandy, Mr. Regan." John-Luke thanked the Regans and picked up his suitcase. Brother Rene was about to lead him outside again when Genevieve spoke.

"I might need to make a confession to someone young, so I'll come over one day." said Genevieve.

"Genevieve, stop teasing him," said her mother.

"Who's teasing? I should think you would be happy knowing I was going to make a good confession," she said with her normal theatrics. She saw John-Luke smile on his way out after hearing the remark.

As she walked over to the staircase, she said over her shoulder "And he is too young and handsome for the monastery."

"Patrick, what are we going to do with her?" Elizabeth shook her head only half in jest.

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"We've tried everything. I think an actual leash or maybe a cage is the only solution we have left," said Patrick with a tinge of sarcasm.

"I wonder where she gets the theatrics from?" asked Elizabeth.

"I don't know what you're referring to," said Patrick, as he smiled while pretending not to know what his wife was talking about.

