

REPOSSESSION OF CLARA

By R. Shannon



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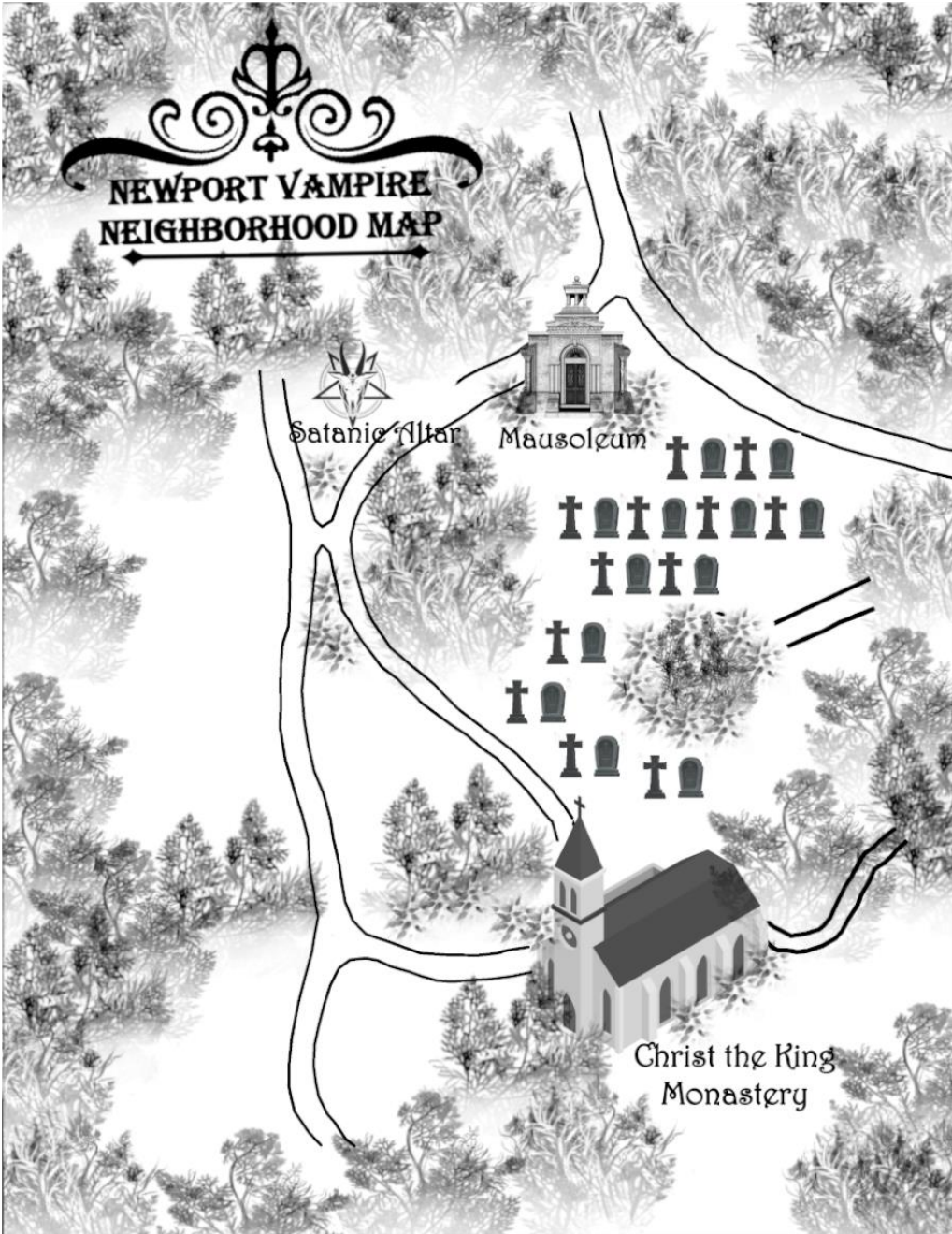
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NEIGHBORHOOD MAP





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CHAPTER 1

JOHN-LUKE REMOVED his monk's habit and hung it on one of two hooks behind the door to his cell, which was technically his closet. Sitting down on his single bed, which had the comfort level of an army cot, he put on his jogging pants, sweatshirt and running shoes. He tucked his scapular and crucifix into his sweatshirt. He took a moment to look again at the new crucifix that his mother and grandmother had sent him. It was 14 carat gold and he knew this was a big purchase for them. It touched his heart when he opened the gift and it touched him as he looked at it now. He put it inside his sweatshirt so it didn't bounce and hit him while running.

As he exited the monastery, he was hit by a late October gust of cold. People raised in Newport, Rhode Island would consider this weather cool or mild as it was only autumn. But living his entire life in south Florida, anything below sixty degrees was considered cold to him.

He left the monastery side entrance and ran back into the woods, through the cemetery and out the main gate to Main Street which was his usual pathway. He planned to clear his mind and allow communion with God; after all, he was still praying for clarity regarding his calling to the monastery or to marriage and family. But as usual, thoughts of Genevieve immediately filled his mind. He was still heartbroken since hearing she was now dating Andrew Langley. Thoughts of seeing her at her parents' dinner party laughing and flirting with Andrew kept reoccurring in his mind and he kept re-experiencing the same disappointment he felt that night. The more he tried to push it out of his mind, the more he felt the sting in his heart.

One minute they were talking about their feelings for one another, and the next minute he heard from Abbot Rene that the Regan sisters were both dating the Langley brothers. He could still remember taking the blow of it.

He interpreted her loss of interest in him as a sign that they were not meant to be, but the feeling of being in love with her was yet to let go of him. He was no longer convinced he belonged in a monastery. Beginning his final period of discernment, he just wondered where he would be in three more months. He had a suspicion he would be back in Florida seeking employment.

It was dark out at six o'clock but there were streetlights along Main Street. He ran at a comfortable pace along the sidewalk. As he cleared his mind, a bit of truth bubbled up; that truth being he was secretly hoping he would run into Genevieve again. He had to stop seeking her out, even secretly. He decided he had to let go of her and return to the monastery a different route tonight.

He stopped jogging and began to walk about three blocks before reaching

the monastery. Instead of continuing straight on Main Street where he knew Genevieve may be walking, he turned right to take a different route back tonight. As he walked down the side street, it grew darker and darker as he walked along. Main Street was well lit as it was a busy thoroughfare, but the side roads had very few streetlights and they were much darker. The cemetery was on his left and there was an old cobblestoned street on his right.

It was quiet except for the cars driving by up on Main Street, but even that sound was fading. Just like on the night he arrived in Rhode Island three months earlier, he suddenly heard leaves rustling indicating someone walking inside the cemetery. He stopped and looked into the cemetery. He saw nothing but kept hearing footsteps crunching leaves and twigs breaking. He watched as a cold apprehension took hold of him.

As he walked about five foot ahead of where he was, he saw a woman inside the cemetery walk up to the fence. She was already looking at him, watching him walk up next to her. She too had the intense eyes and ghostly coloring of a vampiress. He immediately had *déjà vu*. Only this woman tonight walked up to the iron fence and she wrapped her hands around the iron pickets of the fence and pulled them apart when she saw him. She slipped through with lightning speed. Her eyes never left John-Luke. In what felt like less than one second, she grabbed him by his neck but he managed to wiggle away from her first attempt to bite him. She had not yet got her footing after coming through the fence.

As he got away, he fell to the ground and she smiled slowly as she reached out to grab and hold him. He saw the fangs. Her eyes were intense. She seemed like she was mesmerized and was acting merely on instinct, like a wild animal.

She knelt down and grabbed his shoulders. With one hand, she tried to turn his head to access his neck. He reached into his shirt and pulled out his crucifix. He held it in front of her face. She gasped. She recoiled, stood up and started hissing. He could see she wanted him so she was discouraged by the cross but was still calculating how to get around the crucifix somehow. She was still hissing but moving around him seeking a different approach. He got up, still holding the crucifix out as far as the neck chain would allow. His heart was pounding and he felt the adrenaline pump through this system. She continued to back up, still hissing. She attempted to swipe at the cross to knock it out of his hand, but he was able to ward off the blows. She finally went back into the cemetery through the same bent iron pickets. She hissed several times at him and then ran deeper into the woods.

John-Luke looked around for any witnesses, but there were none. He doubted anyone driving by up on Main Street was able to see what happened. He recognized her as the same woman who fainted inside the cemetery a few weeks earlier. At that time, she bore the wounds of a vampire bite herself. This was the second vampiress he had seen around the monastery, but he still found it hard to admit he believed in them. He continued walking back to the monastery allowing himself to settle down.

As the danger was now averted and he walked slowly, the adrenaline leveled out and he fully caught his breath. Even though he just lived through the event, he felt a denial also rising, like a part of him wanted to deny what just happened.

He kept looking over his shoulder for the next several blocks until he got home. He thought to himself, *“Are these vampires part of my discernment? Or are they meant to scare me out of here entirely? Because if it’s the latter, they’re working. There was such a feeling of darkness about the woman, like I could feel her emptiness and the absence of any soul.”*

After entering the monastery, John-Luke went to Brother Benedict’s cell to talk to him but he was out for the evening. John-Luke would have to tell him about his encounter in the morning. He went back to his own cell and tried to analyze what the meaning of this could be but his mind kept going round and round as there was no logic or reason he could hang onto.



~ MEANWHILE ~

Genevieve was walking slowly on Main Street waiting for John-Luke to catch up and run into her again. She detected he may be ignoring her as he hadn’t gone running for a few days in a row. But the last time they talked, they both admitted they had feelings for each other and he said this would be a time of testing to see if their feelings would last. She told him she would still plan her ‘accidental run-ins’ at night so they could talk and he seemed to be okay with it.

She knew he was out running tonight as she saw him leave the monastery forty minutes ago and that was about the time it took him to run one and a half miles in the opposite direction and then come back to where Genevieve would position herself for her run-in. He always ran the same route through the cemetery, up to Main Street and then he came back on Main Street where she was now slowly walking. But now he wasn’t anywhere to be seen.

She said to herself, *“If he took a different route home, that is just another example that he is really avoiding me. I don’t know why. He told me he had feelings for me and he wasn’t sure what they meant. Can he just be keeping to himself because of his discernment? Has he changed his mind about us?”*

Genevieve was left with nothing but questions. She had fallen in love with him the first night they accidentally met. He was dropped off at her family home instead of at the monastery and she liked him right from the beginning. The monastery was the original Regan estate house but it was donated to the monks sixty years ago when the new Regan home had been built. They technically had the same address so it was common for people to show up looking for the monastery or to receive packages for them. Her family was used to it.

Her mother had scolded her several times over the last two months to leave

John-Luke alone because God was calling him, but she was unable to suppress her feelings and impulses all the time.

She waited another ten minutes, but then reluctantly, walked home by herself. As she entered the drawing room in her own home, she looked out the window and she saw the light on in his room. This confirmed he was back in his cell in the monastery. It also confirmed that he had taken another route home and he was avoiding her.

“I guess he changed his mind about us. Maybe my mother is right. I better just leave him alone.”

Her sister Ciara came into the drawing room and she was waiting to be picked up by her new boyfriend, Lawrence Langley. She was dressed up for dinner and for the first time, Genevieve felt a bit jealous of her sister. The jealousy usually went the other way around because Ciara was quiet, reserved and never had a boyfriend in high school or college. Genevieve was the outgoing, popular girl all through high school and even now into college. She was in her second year in college but had no direction or idea what she wanted to do with her life or even what area of study to choose. Ciara was already graduated and knew she wanted to study veterinary science and become a vet.

“You look beautiful, Ciara,” said Genevieve as her sister came into the drawing room to join her. Ciara was wearing a casual dress and heels and her makeup was flawless.

“Thank you.” Ciara smiled. “You look like you lost your best friend.”

“I think I did.”

“What happened?” asked Ciara.

“Nothing. I’m just hung up on John-Luke and I can’t get him out of my mind and he’s not even interested,” said Genevieve as she began to pace or wander around the drawing room as her sister now sat quietly on the couch waiting for Lawrence to come.

“He’s going to be a monk. You probably only want him because he’s a challenge. You have plenty of other guys who are interested in you. Andrew is one. Why don’t you come on a double date with us? Once you are around someone else, your feelings for the monk will fade.”

“You’re probably right, but right now I just have to absorb the heart stab,” said Genevieve.

“What do you mean ‘heart stab’?”

“He told me only a few nights ago that he did have loving feelings for me. He told me he thought about me all the time.” Her delivery was high drama as she wandered aimlessly around the room.

The drawing room, which was more commonly called ‘the big room’ in modern times, was a large room with various vignettes of furniture settings. It was a combined living room, study and antiques-display area. There was a couch and two chairs in front of the fireplace, all with their own end tables and lamps. There was an old antique desk and two chairs in another section. Her

father's bar and cocktail set was in the corner by the doors and there were various odd pieces of furniture, tables, and display pieces that filled the rest of the room. There were portraits and other paintings that had been collected and passed down through about three generations.

On two sides of the room, there were floor to ceiling casement windows and beautiful floor length drapes. The room looked out onto the estate properties, which included the monastery. While still wandering aimlessly around the room, Genevieve stopped and looked out one of the windows over to the monastery, but then continued her meandering and whining.

"He just had a weak moment, Genevieve. You have that effect on all men. Just let him be. Andrew is really good looking and he has asked about the double date twice already. He wants to go," said Ciara waiting for a reply.

"I'll think about it. I may need a week to absorb this disappointment. I just need to talk to John-Luke, but I can't catch him alone. He used to garden outside so I could go walking and then get to talk to him. But now he's inside gardening in the solarium and I don't have any access to him."

"I think that's the whole point of a monastery," said Ciara. Her sister didn't laugh or continue to banter so Ciara knew she was really hurt over this.

"Why don't you write him a letter and tell him how you feel. At least you will get it off your chest and the ball will be in his corner then. This way, before you completely let go, he'll know how you feel," said Ciara.

Genevieve turned with renewed hope. "I like that idea. But how will I give it to him if he's not jogging anymore and he's not working outside? Should I mail it to him?" She looked skeptically at her sister.

"You can just go right up, open the solarium door and hand it to him," said Ciara.

"Is that what you would do?" asked Genevieve.

"I wouldn't dare set foot in a monastery to deliver a letter, but it's definitely something you would do," said Ciara.

"It is something I would do," said Genevieve slowly smiling. Her mind began to calculate and suddenly, she had renewed hope.



At about ten-thirty that same night, the goth kids gathered in the woods between the monastery, the cemetery, and the Balmont Funeral Home. There was a section way in the back that was far away from Main Street, the monastery and the funeral home. It was here, deep in the woods, the kids would gather at night. They were an odd group, most dressed in the dark gothic style but some others were just runaways or local kids who came just on a whim.

They smoked pot and drank beer and usually one of the guys would gather small branches and twigs to light a small campfire. They sat around and talked tough, talked music and whatever else goth kids talk about.

Eric Cantor was a local kid from a respectable family. This area of Newport was filled with respectable wealthy families. Unfortunately, his parents had no control over him and he 'went goth' when he was 15 years old. Now at 17, he basically came and went at home as he wanted. Raised as an Episcopal, he stopped going to church and his parents found satanic literature around his room. They were worried and fretting every week to their pastor but none of them could 'talk sense' to Eric.

Whether it was never having been paddled as a three-year old or being raised in a generation that encouraged parents and children to be friends, the Cantors had lost all control over Eric and they now lived almost at his mercy. Eric sauntered around with the over-confidence of a street thug even though he was still in high school, still living at home and his mother still did his laundry.

The campfire was boring and Eric decided to go home and watch TV instead. He left the circle and started making his way over towards the hole in the hedges which was on the side of the cemetery because the main gates to the cemetery were locked tonight. Sometimes the gates were locked at nine, sometimes ten and sometimes not at all. It seemed to depend upon how busy the funeral home was.

As he approached the hedges, he heard someone come up behind him. He turned around and there was a woman whose eyes were piercing and animalistic. She grabbed him by the shoulders but he warded her off with his arm. He panicked and tried to fight her off but she had the strength of two large men. She was trying to bite his neck and he put his hand in the way. She bit his wrist and began to suck his blood. He screamed out and she scratched the side of his face. She continued to hold him and consume blood through the veins in his wrist.

In his panic, he reached up and although he was wearing a satanic upside-down cross, he turned it right side up and put it close to her face as she was still biting and sucking blood from his wrist. She recoiled and hissed. She let go and he got up on his feet. He continued to hold the cross as a weapon as he backed up towards the hedges. She continued to hiss and she then ran back into the woods.

He got outside the cemetery and crossed the street. He was out of breath and shaking with panic. Using his cell phone in very-shaking hands, he dialed 911 and told them he was attacked by a vampire or some weird creature. He was bleeding and he needed the cops.

Within 5 minutes an ambulance showed up. Eric kept looking for the cops and one came along after the paramedics came over to him.

The cop joined them and the paramedics were asking Eric his name, what year it was, and who was president. They looked at his wrist which did have two puncture wounds and was still bleeding.

One paramedic said, "let us have a look at your wound, Eric."

Eric let them look at the wound and they began to clean it first in order to bandage it.

“I was bitten by a vampire, a female one, in the cemetery,” said Eric in all seriousness.

“I’m sure you were,” said the paramedic. “Was she blonde or brunette?”

“You’re not taking me seriously, I can tell. She was real. She lunged at me, trying to bite my neck and I was able to ward her off but she bit my wrist and sucked blood from me.” Eric was waiting for a look of validation but none came.

One of the paramedics in the back mumbled, “he timed his drugs wrong again.” Eric heard this and the snickers that came after it.

“I’m serious. I was bitten. This is evidence.” Eric was now shouting for someone to take him seriously.

One of the female paramedics rubbed his shoulder and told him, “Eric, relax, we’re going to take you in for treatment for your vampire bite. Just relax.”

“You believe me then?” asked Eric.

“Yes, I believe you, honey. Just relax.”

The paramedics had the gurney set up and they told Eric to lay down on it. He was reluctant.

The female who called him ‘honey’ said, “Eric, we need to treat your vampire bite because you are still bleeding.”

“Okay, but you believe me, right?” asked Eric as he laid down on the gurney.

“Yes, honey, we all believe you,” said the female paramedic as she helped pull the gurney straps tightly around Eric. “Relax, Eric. We’re going to get you help, honey.” She rubbed his forearm again as they put him into the ambulance.



CHAPTER 2

DARIUS WAS STILL longing for Ciara and kicking himself for allowing her to fall out of his power. She was now dating Lawrence Langley and Darius was getting madder and madder each time he saw her being dropped off at her estate home and kissed by him. His dark impulse was to approach Lawrence, snap his spine, which would be easy enough, but the blowback from that kind of thing can be tricky nowadays.

Darius had positioned himself in front of Ciara's house behind a tree in her front yard. He saw the headlights of Lawrence's BMW as he drove up the winding driveway to Ciara's home. He parked about three feet away from the front door; Darius figured it was for privacy as there were two flood lights shining down at the beautiful double mahogany front doors of the mansion.

Darius could see movement in the car but Ciara and Lawrence were in the dark for several minutes. Darius' anger rose every minute of the wait. He assumed they were kissing.

Lawrence exited the driver's side door and came around and opened the door for Ciara. She got out and Darius was struck by her beauty. She wore makeup and had a beautiful knee-length dress with high heels on, which was his favorite on women. Her overcoat was form fitting and only added to her beauty. She was even more beautiful than he remembered. Lawrence moved in to kiss her and she wrapped her arms around his neck. He leaned in and kissed her deeply. The sight of her kissing stimulated Darius' passions, but the sight of Lawrence being kissed by her was turning his anger into rage. Luckily, it was only a thirty-second kiss and she went inside.

Lawrence returned to his car and Darius thought about following him and eliminating the competition, but with today's forensics and CCTV cameras everywhere, expressing rage on the deserving was getting harder to get away with. He missed the 1920s and 1930s for that reason. He decided it wasn't worth the possible complications.

Once Lawrence had driven away and Ciara was inside, Darius walked around the Regan property to the back of the estate house where he knew Ciara's bedroom was located. There was no light on in her room, but he knew it would come on when she entered the room.

He waited forty minutes in the dark just longing to feel her presence. Finally, the light came on. Darius felt connected to her on a very deep level. He felt some minuscule level of satisfaction just knowing she was in her room

and she was alone. He longed to materialize in her room to talk to her, but she was no longer in his power and she may not protect him. He just got rid of the last private investigator who was complicating his life and he didn't need to alert the cops in this area again. He was determined to stay under the radar in this new town.

He basked in Ciara's presence for another twenty minutes and then he walked back to the cellar of the funeral home which he called 'the cave'. It was where his living space was, including his coffin. As a vampire, he felt powerful but vulnerable. If his secret got out, it could lead to being taken into custody or worse, being subjected to scientific research done on him. This was his greatest fear, to wind up in some Area 51 type environment in some cage. It was these situations that were his nightmares, being found out and overwhelmed by 'the authorities', too many to fight off.

As he walked along, he realized that his feelings for Ciara were similar to his feelings for his first love, Izabela, who he loved dearly before he was first bitten and became part of the living dead. At that time, his feelings were human, he was a younger man and his feelings went deep, down to his soul. His love and desire for Izabela felt eternal, he knew at the time they would last forever. Izabela didn't last forever, but his feelings for her did.

His life as a vampire caused his heart to harden over the years as he had to be ready on a daily basis to kill to survive. That level of desperation and fear can harden any heart.

He gave up believing in finding true love again long ago. His life with Izabela had gone into a memory hole along with the memories of his parents and siblings, everyone he actually loved. He had outlived all of them and he felt a deep loneliness that he had been carrying for longer than a century now.

His focus now was feeding from multiple women so he didn't kill anyone and therefore he could remain hidden from the authorities. He would love to claim it was all virtuous but the truth was, over-feeding and leaving the women for dead, which was easy enough in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, wasn't so easy anymore. Since around 1960, the forensics in crime detection had increased and become so high tech that 'getting away with murder' had become extremely difficult, if not its own art form.

Yes, he gave in to his sexual desires with most of the women in his bevy, but it was lust and only lust. He told them all he loved them. But within his own thoughts, he knew he loved them only for their love and loyalty to him. It was a selfish love and he knew it. His love for them lacked the depth of the love he once experienced for Izabela. Lying about his love, and deceit in general, had become the norm in his vampire life. Everything he was and did needed the cover of darkness.

Life had become different now since he met Ciara. He wanted her love and loyalty, but he sensed there was something deeper with her. He wanted her to love him freely, like Izabela did. He knew his soul was too old for Ciara and he lacked the confidence of luring her on his own. He would need to repossess

her first and keep her as he did the other women, but then as she fell in love with him, he could withdraw his power a little at a time. He wanted to feel freely loved by her like he was by Izabela. He already knew what being loved and feared was like from his other women. Something in Ciara, that he could not put his finger on, lured him into believing he could truly love again.

As he approached his cave, he knew he would repossess her, but how? She had blocked him on her cell phone. He no longer had access to her and materializing in her room was out of the question.

Once inside his cave, he spent two hours alone thinking about how he could recapture her. Then his blood and sexual lust got the better of him and he summoned Marguerite down to his cave and he spent the rest of the night with her. He satiated himself in all ways, but Ciara never left his mind.



Mr. and Mrs. Cantor were speaking to the emergency room doctor outside the enclosed treatment area. It was suggested to them, and they agreed, to have Eric stay overnight to speak with a psychiatrist about his so-called ‘run-in with the vampiress’. There would be a staff doctor on in the morning.

“Doctor, he used to be a wonderful boy, and then he started reading satanic books and now this. I could have predicted this,” said Mrs. Cantor, dabbing at her eyes with a worn-out tissue.

“Is this a reputable psychiatrist? I don’t want some intern or first year shrink taking my son’s case. I want the best psychiatrist you have on staff. Do you understand?” Mr. Cantor was firm and the emergency room doctor told him he would look into who was on between now and the morning and they would bring the psychiatrist with the most experience.

“Maybe he had a psychotic break and this is what led him to the satanic books to begin with,” said Mrs. Cantor to her husband.

“That’s probably what happened. We’ll get the best help for him,” said Mr. Cantor as he put his arm around his wife.

Eric was texting his friends from the goth hangout, but no one was responding. As he sat on the emergency room gurney and learned he would be staying overnight to see ‘another doctor about his bite’, he regretted calling the police at all.

Read Repossession of Ciara