

THE BLOOD OF ANIMALS

Written by

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(1st 12 pages)

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**EXT. OVERCAST BEACH - DAY**

ARNDT ANDERSON (40s), pale, boyish and sculpted, sits knees-to-chest on the sand, watching the waves.

The wind whips up. The frayed frills of his old justacorps flap at his wrists.

**EXT. OFFICE BUILDING LOT - NIGHT**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Piano and Orchestra No. 23 in A Major: II. Adagio" plays softly.

Arndt, in a trench-coat, seemingly glides across a shopfront. Lapels bob alongside his silhouetted face. EARBUD WIRES reveal the source of MOZART.

He walks into a business park: bland tilt-up buildings; empty parking lots.

**INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT**

BING! Elevator doors open. MOZART continues tinnily from Arndt's earbuds.

**INT. OFFICE BUILDING, MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM - NIGHT**

Rows of white foldable chairs face a wooden pulpit. A table with cups and a glass drink dispenser at the back.

PEOPLE stand in pre-event chatter, each one in perfect pastel polos. Cups of *something red and viscous* in hand. Each and every SMILE – and *everyone is smiling*, like Pentecostals on Easter Sunday – reveals SHARP INCISORS...

VAMPIRES. Pale and slightly bloated, but of a variety we haven't seen before. They look... like a bunch of white suburbanites... ie square, *harmless*.

Arndt removes his coat and folds it over his arm; he wears a pastel polo, too. We look down at the table with him at:

PAMPHLETS. One reads "*The Freedom of Abstinence*" over a bright photo of a white laughing couple.

DORRIS GAINES (50s) waddles up. She's every matronly office secretary whose bad side you never want be on: petty, unfit, self-important, yet effusive if you're the object of her affection.

DORRIS  
 (deep Southern accent)  
 Arndt! Beautiful boy. How are you?

Arndt pulls out his earbuds. MOZART halts.

ARNDT  
 What was that?

DORRIS  
 I said: Arndt! Beautiful boy. How are you?

ARNDT  
 Oh, hallo, Dorris. How are you doing?

DORRIS  
 Oh, I'm fine, thank you.  
 Refreshments for the evenin are from Mr. Henderson.

She fills a paper cup with red liquid and hands it to Arndt.

DORRIS (CONT'D)  
 It's 'coon blood...

Arndt's eyebrows raise as he gulps--

DORRIS (CONT'D)  
 No. Not raccoon... Oh it's...  
 (remembering)  
 Uhh... Opossum!

ARNDT  
 (sipping)  
 Mmm. Really gudt...  
 (smacks lips)  
 is that dog I am tasting, too?

DORRIS  
 Oh you'd have to ask Mr. Henderson that.

MR. HENDERSON, an exceptionally cheery vampire, waves from the other side of the room. Dorris smiles a beat at Arndt.

DORRIS (CONT'D)  
 Arndt we are very proud of you.

ARNDT  
 Oh? Oh! Yah. Danke schoen.

DORRIS

Two-hundred years! Wow. Very proud.

Arndt finishes his cup, nods. She waits. Takes Arndt's empty cup and hands him a second.

DORRIS (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Have another. There's plenty.

She winks at him. He feigns enticement.

**LATER** ON the Congregation, seated.

ANGLE ON A WHITE WOMAN playing a cheap KEYBOARD. Arndt hums along with his mouth closed as others SING.

**LATER** ON HAROLD (early 30s) — paunchy, glasses, Southern accent — standing at the pulpit.

HAROLD

If you'd like to discuss the *human media's* recent assaults on our heritage, I'll be hosting a ga— a social ga-gathering on the subject at mother's house this Saturday at three a.m.

He steps away. Then back up to the mic:

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Come find me after Congregation if you'd like directions.

He steps away from the pulpit. Tepid applause.

ELDER MURNAU (51), an unflappable, cheery man, steps up to the pulpit. He's very white. As in his hair is gossamer silver and he has zero melanin. The room quiets.

ELDER MURNAU

Wow, very good. I'm looking forward to that meeting. And to all of you, thank you for gathering with us tonight—

**LATER** the Congregants file out, CHATTERING.

Arndt brings up the rear.

ELDER MURNAU (OS) (CONT'D)

Arndt!

Elder Murnau steps from the pulpit.

ELDER MURNAU (CONT'D)  
 What did you think of today's  
 gathering?

ARNDT  
 Elder Murnau, yah, hi. Ser gudt,  
 yah.

ELDER MURNAU  
 Say, Arndt, I wanted to talk to you  
 about your two-hundred years...

ARNDT  
 Yah. I am feeling very excited.

ELDER MURNAU  
 It's not something to sniffle at,  
 Arndt.

ARNDT  
 Oh. I am sniffing?

ELDER MURNAU  
 No, no. I just mean this puts you  
 in the limelight...  
 (a beat)  
 so to speak — I would never wish  
 any undue light to shine upon you—  
 (chuckles)  
 What I mean is this makes you a  
 leader in our humble Congregation.

ARNDT  
 Yah. I am knowing this, and I am...  
 (finding the right words)  
 very excited.

ELDER MURNAU  
 I know you are. I know you are. So:  
 let's book some time to speak ahead  
 of your Ceremony, yeah? Say week  
 after next?

ARNDT  
 Yah, yah. That works, yah.

ELDER MURNAU  
 Excellent. Okay, well...

Elder Murnau touches his hand to his mouth.

ELDER MURNAU (CONT'D)  
 Forever abstinent.

Elder Murnau raises his hand. Arndt follows suit.

ARNDT  
Forever transcendent.

ELDER MURNAU  
I bid you good penance.

ARNDT  
Yah, good penance. Yah.

An awkward beat. Each waits for the other to leave.

ELDER MURNAU  
Well, goodnight.

Elder Murnau clears his throat. He walks away. Then he turns back to Arndt.

ELDER MURNAU (CONT'D)  
Oh would you mind helping Harold  
tear down this evening?

**INT. OFFICE BUILDING, MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM - LATER**

Empty but for Harold and Arndt, who stack chairs. Arndt bears the weight of a one-sided conversation.

HAROLD  
I mean what got me goin on it was  
realizin "vampires" is like a  
*perjorative* if you think about it.  
You know?

ARNDT  
Yah... I am seeing this.

HAROLD  
Yeah it's like, uh, insulting  
cuz... that's what people called us  
in the ol' days, but— well not  
that I would know, I'm not that  
old— but you know. You know? That  
we ain't "vampires" no more. We're,  
uh, what does Elder Murnau say in  
sermons? *Neature perfected*.  
Transcendent. And vampires was what  
they called us back when we still  
bit.

ARNDT  
Mm, yah, yah. I am seeing your  
point—

HAROLD

And like *derpicting* us all with Lithuanian accents? I mean c'mon we're from all over the world. Not just Lithuania.

ARNDT

This is, yah, a really gudt point, Harold. Yah.

HAROLD

Ah, man, Brother, I knew you'd understand what was floating around in my darned head.

(beat)

Hey you hear what happened to Karen O'Callahan?

ARNDT

I do not believe so, nein.

HAROLD

They found her *micro-raving* mangos.

He pauses for effect...

HAROLD (CONT'D)

And *bitin* into 'em.

ARNDT

(blankly)

Oh, yah...

Then Arndt sees Harold is full of admonishment:

ARNDT (CONT'D)

Oh nein, this is... Eh—

HAROLD

(low)

Yeah, Brother. *Mastication*. Right there in the kitchen space down the hall. Simulation of biting.

Arndt gulps.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

That sorta *berhavior* leads to lots worse, you know. It's people like that who end up doin somethin stupid and givin us all a bad name. Get the human media all up in hands and arms.

Harold turns the lights off. They exit...

**INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

They walk.

HAROLD

What drives someone to go back to the old ways, you know? What's in her heart?

ARNDT

Yah, it is hard to know this.

HAROLD

What's in *your* heart, Brother?

Hits the elevator button. Looks at Arndt.

ARNDT

Oh I like to think mein heart is pure and gutt.

HAROLD

(laughs)

Yeah well from where I'm standin your heart's pretty darn pure like a white gushin geyser from them Swiss Alps. Or *German* Alps I guess in your case. Pure and *white* and—

DING! the elevator doors open to...

AN OLD JANITOR, Guatemalan, *backing out of the elevator* with a yellow cleaning cart. BANDA MUSIC from his earbuds.

Harold SUCKS in air. Arndt stiffens. The Janitor turns.

JANITOR

(over his banda music)

Hi.

Neither vampire moves. Both grimace.

The Janitor continues, WHEELING his cart around the corner.

The BANDA MUSIC drifts down the hall for a beat.

**EXT. OFFICE BUILDING LOT - NIGHT**

Harold stumbles out of the building. Arndt supports him.



HAROLD

Why's it so darn hard for us to find a place to Congregate in peace? Away from... from...

He points to the office building.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

This is in direct uh, uh *opposition* with the Tenets of Vampiric Goodness.

ARNDT

Yah this is very true, Harold.

Harold takes a breath.

HAROLD

Too many darned humans around. Sometimes I wish we could just get rid of 'em. Would make resisting temptation and all that easier.

ARNDT

Maybe you should suggest to Elder Murnau about finding a new place to Congregate?

HAROLD

Yeah. Maybe...

Steps onto a ELECTRIC SCOOTER.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Anyway, Brother: I admire you. Two-hundred years of abstinence is... very honor-ble.

Arndt fidgets. Harold scowls.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You need a ride?

He gestures to the back of his scooter.

ARNDT

Oh nein, no. Danke schoen. I take the light rail.

HAROLD

Huh. Where do you live again?

ARNDT  
 (hesitates)  
 I am living in the Union District.

HAROLD  
 That's—that's not a very good  
 neighborhood, Brother.

ARNDT  
 Why do you say this?

HAROLD  
 I mean you must be the only  
 Congregant out there.

ARNDT  
 Yah. Yah but I am never going out,  
 so... I am not like ever seeing  
 many humans really.

HAROLD  
 (dubious)  
 Okay... I trust your judgment,  
 Brother. Forever abstinent—

He puts his hand to his mouth. Arndt mirrors him. They raise  
 their hands to the sky.

ARNDT/HAROLD  
 Forever transcendent.

Harold takes off, the electric motor WHINING quietly, as  
 Arndt stands, silent and alone, in the middle of the lot.

**INT. LIGHT RAIL STATION - NIGHT**

It's empty save for Arndt, sitting beneath a single sodium-  
 vapor light. MOZART plays on his headphones.

**INT. LIGHT RAIL CAR - NIGHT**

Arndt rides alone... lost to MOZART.

The train slows: its brakes SCREEEEEECH to a halt.

BING! Doors open to A BLACK MAN, wearing tattered, extra  
 layers — perhaps homeless.

Arndt holds his beath, stands slowly.

They stare at one another from opposite sides of the empty  
 car.

The Black Man shakes his head and sits across from Arndt.  
Arndt remains standing.

BLACK MAN

Yes?

Arndt opens his mouth, revealing his INCISORS.

The Black Man PULLS BACK at the site of Arndt's fangs.

Arndt CLOSES his mouth. And without taking his eyes off the man, sidesteps, then steps backward slowly, mechanically, off the train.

The doors SLAM SHUT in front of Arndt's face.

The Black man shakes his head in dismissal, probably disgust.

Outside, Arndt blinks and the train begins down the tracks.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

Arndt sulks as he walks. COMMOTION ahead — he lifts his head: across the street THREE GOTHS LAUGH as they exit a club.

One of them smiles: sharp incisors. Colored contacts. White make-up. But then she pulls her fake vampire teeth out.

Arndt squints. Looks up at the pink neon sign: "THE HOLE"

Below that: "VAMPIRE NIGHT"

The Goths begin to walk in his direction. He flips his lapels up and walks off.

**EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - LATER THAT NIGHT**

Arndt slips into the dilapidated brownstone.

**INT. TENEMENT HALLWAY - SAME**

ON A SINGLE KEY, which Arndt struggles to slot into its lock. He glances over at a DOOR DOWN THE HALL. A light turns on behind it—

Arndt turns back to his apartment — FUMBLES the key on the ground. CLING-CLANG!

Freezes. FLOORBOARDS CREAK from behind the other door.

He PICKS UP the key. It makes its entry into the lock and Arndt steps into:

**INT. ARNDT'S TENEMENT - CONTINUOUS**

A studio tenement. Stuffy yet orderly. Arndt shuts the door. Silence. He SIGHS...

ANGLE ON ARNDT in the center of his studio, silently appreciating:

- SELF-PORTRAITS rendered in every conceivable discipline — Cubist, hyper-real, Caravaggio

- His body opponent bag ("BOB" — a human-looking rubber sparring dummy)

- RED RIBBONS tacked to the walls in a lateral ring. One says "YEAR 199" and hangs just before a corner, Year 1's ribbon is tacked to the other side: no room for Year 200

Arndt puzzles over this for a beat, then turns to his COMPUTER. The computer monitor returns his gaze.

CUT TO:

**INT. ARNDT'S TENEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

THE FRIDGE, empty save for a single CELLOPHANE TRAY. Arndt grabs it and looks at it:

STEAK, its "sell by" date is unreadable. Arndt squints hard at it. Thinks for a moment.

CUT TO:

SPEAKERS blare Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier, BWV 846-849*.

THE COMPUTER, a dated, off-white hunk of squared plastic, BEEPING as it boots up.

THE STEAK lies in its tray beside the monitor.

ARNDT watches the screen flicker, struggling to render frames of a fitness video:

GREYSONPUMPS98

Puuush your butt out. *Lift* your chest. Your neck should sit neutrally between your shoulders like this. Don't extend...

WE PUSH IN ON Arndt, enraptured, as he takes the steak from its cellophane tray and SUCKS at it with abandon.

REVERSE OF GREYSON's oscillating Adam's apple... no, his JUGULAR... *Bach* still pulsing along...

Arndt types a comment:

"You are so fit!"

Then deletes "fit" and types:

"You are so knowledgeable!! Thank you for this video!!! :-)"

He hits enter and waits a beat. A response:

"Thank you arndt1699!"

This excites Arndt more than we've yet seen.

#### **INT. ARNDT'S BATHROOM - NEXT EVENING**

Silence. White candles. Where the mirror should be - a large print of Caspar David Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea*.

IN THE BATHTUB, Arndt is asleep. White sheet pulled taught over his face.

We hear a PERCUSSIVE HOLLOW TAPPING, plus what sounds like a SQUEAKING WHEEL. Arndt sits up. Listens. A FLUSH; it's his neighbor relieving himself on the other side of the wall.

#### **INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER**

The STEAK is mutilated on the CHEST beside the desk.

Arndt picks up the cellophane tray. Wipes BLOOD from the chest. Then something draws him to open it and as he does:

A DROP OF BLOOD falls from the tray to AN OLD PHOTO ALBUM. He opens it.

(To what exactly what we don't see, but a something we'll discover later...)

It draws him in. He's lost to nostalgia, introspection...

His hand paws at the page...