

## Lily Dodge

Urban Fantasy | 3<sup>rd</sup> person | Past Tense | 1.6k words

Blaike raced down a chilly alleyway, her light leather boots silent against the asphalt. Her sapphire amulet bounced against her chest as she ran, but she didn't dare stop to tuck it back inside her shirt. Blaike was on the trail of a Vampire, and she refused to let another one get away.

Reaching a dead end, Blaike slowed to a stop, glancing around in confusion. Cinderblock walls blocked her in on three sides, plain buildings with narrow windows looking out over the alleyway.

It wouldn't have been possible for the Vampire she was hunting to have gotten in through one of the apartment windows - the creatures couldn't enter a building without being invited in. So where had her quarry gone?

Taking a deep breath, Blaike shut her eyes and closed her fist around the amulet hanging from her neck. It was infused with Fae magics that allowed her to channel her own powers even among all the chaos of the human world. With her amulet, Blaike could sense the presence of a Vampire, and she'd been following its signals when she found herself in this nondescript alley.

Sure enough, everything Blaike could intuit was telling her that the Vampire was behind the gray wall of the apartment building. Perhaps it lived here, after all, or had been lucky enough to find a human to welcome it inside.

Letting go of the blue jewel, Blaike crept toward the one illuminated window. Scrambling nimbly up the rough wall, she was able to peek inside. There, she saw a young human man, wearing a cheap facsimile of a Vampire's cloak, sitting on an unmade bed beside a human woman covered in what looked like green paint.

Why on earth had this foolish human triggered her amulet? Blaike pressed her nose against the window, trying to get a better look. When the boy opened his mouth to talk, Blaike saw it: he was wearing a pair of Vampire fangs.

Incredibly realistic Vampire fangs.

"Hey! Hey!" Blaike knocked on the window, motioning for the humans to open it up and let her inside. They looked up, startled, but Blaike just kept tapping. "Let me in!"

Finally, the boy stood up and slid open the window, his mouth still open in shock. "How did you - this is the second floor!"

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“I’m a good climber,” Blaike mumbled, shoving the human aside so she could get into the small, messy bedroom.

“Wait a minute,” the girl on the bed said, pointing at Blaike with dawning recognition in her eyes. “That necklace. You’re...a Vampire hunter.”

“Oh shit,” said the human boy, taking a few hurried steps backwards and raising his hands. “It’s just a costume, I swear, I’m not -”

“I know.” Blaike sighed. “But those fangs you’re wearing. Where did you get them?”

“These?” The human popped the fangs out of his mouth, holding them out towards Blaike. The amulet warmed against her chest, and she was sure that they were the source of the vampiric essence she has been chasing. “Some costume place on Pacific Street, I think?”

Blaike took the fangs, turning them over in her fingers and wincing at the strength of their energy. She dropped them into her pocket and wiped her hands on her shirt.

“Hey,” the girl said. “Those cost money!”

“They’re not worth the trouble they’ll bring you,” Blaike warned. “But fine. I’ll buy them off you. How much did you pay for them?”

The boy glanced over at the girl, and Blaike guessed that he was trying to figure out whether he could squeeze her for a bit more than he’d actually paid.

“Before you tell me, you should know I’m a full blood Fae. We can smell a lie, and we don’t like the stink.”

“Thirty five bucks, I think,” the human mumbled.

“I’ll make it an even forty if you can tell me who sold them to you,” Blaike offered.

“Just the guy at the store,” he said, shrugging. “I didn’t even know they were real! I just wanted a cool Halloween costume.”

Blaike rolled her eyes. She believed him - after all, no one who knew anything about Vampires would risk selling a pair of fangs like this, especially not to a pimple-faced kid looking for an edgy Halloween costume. But it baffled her that any humans could think

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Vampires were cool, or want to dress up like one for any reason. They were a blight on this world, dangerous and deadly, and if the humans were smart, they'd all join with the Fae on their mission to rid the world of the bloodsucking fiends.

"You shouldn't be messing around with stuff like this," Blaike said as she handed over two twenty dollar bills. "Next year, just be a ham sandwich or something."

"Okay," the kid muttered.

Without another word, Blaike clambered back through the open window, leaping deftly down to the ground below.

Erica, Blaike's human best friend and partner in Vampire hunting, was waiting for her, arms crossed, a smirk on her face.

"Catch any Vampires in the Portland State dorms?" Erica asked.

"Shut up," Blaike growled, but she couldn't help smiling at her friend. She hadn't known the buildings were college dorms, but it made the whole scene make a bit more sense. "No Vampires, just some dumb kid who managed to get his hands on these."

Blaike pulled the fangs from her pocket to show Erica. The human grimaced at the sight of them. "Real?"

"Yep. And powerful. Set off my amulet from a block away."

"Where'd he get them?"

"Not sure yet. We've got a costume shop to check out tomorrow." Blaike pocketed the fangs, and together she and Erica left the alleyway and headed down the crowded Portland sidewalk. It was Halloween night, and there were costumed revelers everywhere. Blaike dodged a drunken pirate and nearly walked directly into a bikini-clad witch. "But what are you doing here? I thought you were going to a party."

"I am." Under the streetlights, Blaike could now see that Erica was wearing a pair of black velvet cat ears and a swishy tail attached to one of her wrists by a thin, clear cord. "I was walking past on my way here, and you pinged on my bracelet."

Blaike sighed. "It doesn't 'ping.' It's not human technology."

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When they started hunting Vampires together, Blaike had given Erica a chunky silver bracelet inlaid with Fae jewels that matched her own sapphire amulet. Even though Erica was human, the bracelet's connection with Blaike was enough to let her know when the Fae was near. It helped them keep track of each other on missions, and was good insurance in case either of them was captured by Vampires. But even though the bracelet was infused with ancient Fae magic, Erica insisted on referring to it with human terminology.

"Whatever," Erica said. "I knew you were close, so I went to check it out. Turns out you were repossessing some kid's Halloween costume."

"It's not a costume. These things are serious. He was putting himself at risk, and who knows where those fangs even came from."

"Right. Well, you certainly can't keep hunting with those in your pocket, so why don't you join me at the party?"

Erica was right - as long as Blaike carried the fangs on her person, there was no way her amulet would pick up on anything else. Blaike shrugged. "I don't have a costume on."

"Of course you do! You're a full blood Fae who's also a Vampire hunter!"

Blaike laughed. "I suppose that counts. Alright, I'm in. Lead the way."

Erica's party was in the basement of a warehouse near the river, pounding with loud bass and packed with sweaty, inebriated humans.

"Come on!" Erica grabbed Blaike's hands and pulled her onto the dance floor. Despite herself, Blaike started to enjoy it, swaying and bouncing to the music, her amulet humming away against her chest as the fangs sat nestled in her pocket.

Soon they were joined by a cluster of strangers, all dancing together, bodies pressed against each other. Erica had her eyes closed, grinding up against another human dressed like an angel, with a sparkly halo swaying on a crooked headband. Blaike smiled. It was nice to take a night off like this.

Suddenly, shouting broke out among the crowd, unintelligible over the nearly deafening music. For a moment, chaos reigned as the dancers shoved against each other, and

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Erica disappeared within the mob. Blaike's hand flew to her amulet, wondering what was going on, but with the fangs in her pocket, everything it gave her was just noise.

Someone grabbed Blaike's arm and she turned, quickly, finding herself face to face with a tall woman, her face covered by a plastic clown mask. Between her useless amulet and the mask, Blaike had no way of telling whether this person was a Vampire, but as the stranger yanked Blaike in close, the Fae could smell the tang of blood, and she knew.

"You're not Alaric," the Vampire snarled, still not letting go of Blaike.

All around them, the dancing had picked up again, and Blaike looked frantically around for Erica.

"Hey!" Blaike shouted, trying to fight the Vampire off her, but between the crush of the crowd and the strength of the Vampire's grip, she was helpless.

"Where is Alaric! Why is his essence coming from you?"

Blaike pressed her lips together, refusing to be interrogated by a bloodsucker. But the Vampire just held her tight, using her other hand to reach into Blaike's pockets.

When she found the pair of fangs, her whole body went rigid with horror, and her grip on Blaike's arm became bruisingly hard.

"What have you done to Alaric?" the Vampire screamed, holding the fangs up to Blaike's face and shaking her with an iron grip. "What have you done?"