

OF  
Nighttimes  
and Secrecy

SARAH MASTERS

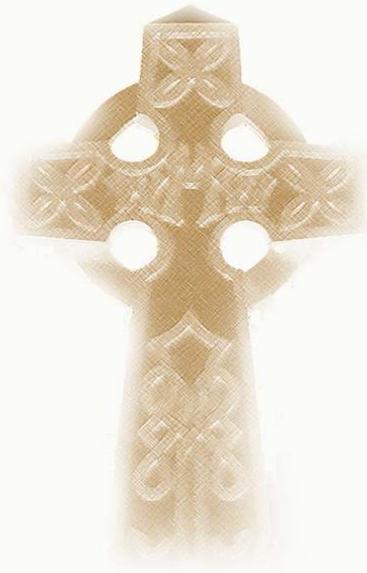
# OF NIGHTTIMES & SECRECY

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Of  
Nights  
&  
Secrets



# Rueben

Discarded bottles hinder my journey, litter the ground, their broken bodies much like my spirit. I need sustenance and...love. Brick walls either side of the alley enclose me, shield me from the eyes of the curious. For curious they are—my sallow features encourage their scrutiny. Scars from the past decorate my face, bear testament to the life I've endured. One of nighttimes and secrecy.

Shrugging into my jacket—the cold nip in the air *bites*—I fasten the buttons, jam my hands inside the pockets, collar touching earlobes, chin tucked low. The alley stretches before me. A journey I take most nights; my destination calls. Whatever time of night, I leave my bed and chase the calling. Tonight, the call is fierce.

The end of the alley gapes—a whale trawling for food, the teeth the refuse, tossed away by uncaring hands. Wind snaps through my hair, brings pain to my temples, and I press on through the streets. *Nearly there.*

Chinok waits for me in the doorway, leans his shoulder against the brick, lifts his hand to draw on the cigarette he holds. A flick of orange light, a mist of grey, and he speaks.

“You came.”

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“I did. As I always do.”

Chinok nudges the door open behind him with a soft sole, turns, and enters. I shadow him, the sound of my footsteps hollow on the wooden flooring inside the building. One wall lantern emits scant light, the glass yellowed with age and dust.

Stairs. A landing. Another door.

“She’s in there,” Chinok says and steps aside to allow my entrance.

The doorknob cold in my hand, I step inside the room and flick my gaze in search of the woman. A bed dominates the gloom, and she dominates the bed, shrouded in black chiffon, her hands and wrists bound to the bedposts, her neck exposed.

Chinok whispers, “I saved her for you.”

## Francine

The handcuffs dug into her wrists and ankles. The men’s entrance set her heart racing, and she inhaled a deep breath. Francine wanted this moment, and now...here it was.

Earlier, the one nearest the door had spotted her waiting for him under the sodium glow of a streetlamp and ushered her inside. Wet from the rain and looking forward to drying off, she’d expected warmth in the

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house, but the air proved just as chilly as outside. The dark hallway harboured shadows. Coats on hooks resembled tall, legless people without heads. A mirror hung on the wall, and the man had stood in front of it, his figure not reflected, and introduced himself.

“I’m Chinok. I forgot to tell you my name last time we met.”

He’d thrust out a hand, and Francine took it, cool slender fingers against hers, and all at once a feeling of belonging enveloped her. And he stood there, that man, the light from the illumination outside a bright layer on his irises, and she wasn’t scared. Wasn’t scared at all.

“Let’s get you upstairs, then,” he said, his teeth a beacon in the murk. “Are you sure you’re ready for this?”

She nodded, then, “Yes. Yes, I’ve been ready for a long time.”

“That’s good. As long as you’re sure.”

He turned and took the stairs two at a time, reached the top before she’d lifted her foot to the first step. Moonbeams shone through the window on the landing, casting a glow down his right side. His black suit appeared grey in the light, and it complemented his lean figure. Chiselled cheek bones and a prominent jaw gave rise to butterflies in her belly, and, cheeks hot, she swallowed and climbed the stairs.

He led her past the banisters to a room at the end of a short hallway. She made out peeling wallpaper, and the scent of damp stung her nostrils. The dingy house added to the mystery that had always

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attracted her to men who roamed at night and slept by day, dangerous, immortal men.

The rain had seeped through her thin coat, and her teeth chattered, the sound amplified in the quiet. Chinok opened the door and revealed a beautiful bedroom. No dirt lingered here, and candles burned in wall sconces, the aroma of vanilla banishing the stench of mould. He walked to a lacquered black wardrobe and threw the doors open. His fingers caressed the clothes, and he paused, inclined his head in thought. In the doorway, Francine rubbed her goose bumped arms, and a drizzle of rain meandered down her temple from her sodden hair.

“This one, I think,” he said and selected a black chiffon dress, holding it up for her inspection.

She smiled as the fabric shimmered, its translucency so alluring. He hung it on the wardrobe door and opened an ottoman beneath the window, pulled out a cream towel.

“You can bathe if you want.” He held the towel out, and the undulating candle flame highlighted his blond hair. “There’s an en suite through that door.” He nodded to the corner. “I won’t disturb you.”

She stepped forward and took the towel, kept her gaze on his eyes, and they still shone amber, yet the candle flickered behind him. Francine smiled, walked toward the bathroom, and halted at the thought that she hadn’t taken the dress. She turned, and Chinok stood directly behind her.

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Far from scaring her, his proximity exacerbated her attraction to him, to what he represented. She breathed in his scent—woody, masculine—and her eyes half closed. He leaned in, his mouth inches from her neck, his breath hot and delicious against her skin. Francine’s heart beat faster, and she waited for the game to begin.

With an abrupt jolt, he stepped away. “I’ll call Rueben while you’re in the bath.”

“Rueben?” she asked, her brow furrowed.

“Yes, you’re Rueben’s girl.”

## Rueben

Her scent, it’s different from the others, stronger, drawing me to the foot of the bed. Her eyes, wide and frank, show no fear, though she isn’t aware that I am real. Not yet.

Chinook’s tread rustles against the carpet, and the door closes with a soft *thwump*. My cock stirs—unusual, for most nights I feed and leave—and I take in the woman’s beauty. She isn’t overly pretty, yet her loveliness stems from something...else, something I’ve never encountered before. Her full lips invite kisses, her open legs a willing mate, and the shock of that word strikes me, a slap to a wet cheek.

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Mate.

Her chest rises and falls, short, rapid breaths, and she bites her lower lip with straight white teeth. Dancing candlelight tints one cheek, and I'm so fascinated by her I'm momentarily stunned.

"Rueben?" she whispers, her voice lilting on the second syllable.

*What a delight...*

"Yes..." My voice cracks, and I wonder at the spell she has cast on me when it is I who does the casting. "And you are...?"

"Francine," she says, her lips quirking into a shy smile.

I stare at her for seconds that seem like minutes, and she squirms a little, releases a tiny whimper. My balls ache, and the reality hits me that I want her, want her for more than quick satisfaction, a feed.

"Will I do?" she asks.

Oh, yes. She will do.

## Francine

Her clit throbbed, swollen with her need for him. She hadn't expected the instant desire that consumed her, an almost frightening jolt that raged through her body, not only for the feel of him against her, inside her, but for *him*. She wanted all he would give.

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Was this love, then? Was this how it felt when Cupid's arrow pierced, or did infatuation wear a mask, confusing her, tricking her into believing she...he...

He walked around the bed and stopped beside her, his soft gaze bathing her in warmth much like her earlier bath. The smell of jasmine and lilies drifted to her, and she knew she'd found her Utopia.

"Yes, you'll do." He sat on the bed, his arm and side an arch over her waist, and his other hand reached out, hovered over her hair as though he didn't dare touch it. "I find you quite delightful, Francine. Where do you live?"

His fingertips smoothed her hair, her cheek, her jaw.

"With you," she whispered, excited by the words. "If you'll have me." A twinge of embarrassment nibbled her guts, and her cheeks heated.

His lazy smile eased her fears, and he brushed across the skin exposed by her sweetheart neckline. She studied his face, the scars marring the skin. Gnarled protrusions dotted the length of one that ran from lips to temple, and she lifted a hand, traced the ridges.

"They do not bother you?" he asked.

Tears filled her eyes, and long-suppressed release slithered through her that her nightly jaunts had paid off. "No."

"How did you find us?" Rueben lowered her dress and fondled her nipple.

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She hiked in a breath. *So close now...* “I’ve waited in the cemetery each night for such a long time. Sat upon the base of a stone cross, and at times I fancied I heard your laughter in the wind behind me.” She sighed at the memory, at how she was chained to the cross until she found him. Rueben. “Chinok came by, happened upon me, and asked me to come.”

Chinok had been out on the hunt, of that she had no doubt, and she had welcomed his presence, the sight of him the near-terminus of what had seemed an endless journey. His predatory stance had irked her—she had been willing, wanted this, after all—but she’d smiled and talked with him a while. That he had not fed from her tainted that night, but the promise of *this* night had buoyed her.

“And we don’t scare you?” He thumbed her nipple, light, wonderful strokes.

She arched her pelvis, and his smile hid the scars.

“No,” she panted. “I-I want you.”

His mouth descended to her nipple, and he sucked, tongue swirling over the hardened nub. She groaned, whimpered, her labia swelling, clit throbbing.

*So ready...*

“Please, remove the cuffs. I need...to touch you.”

He raised his head and smiled. His eyes softened, and he reached into his pocket and produced a key. Rueben stood and released her

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ankles, the blessed liberty a balm to her aching soul. Once he freed her hands, she cupped his cheeks and drew him to her, kissed his beautiful soft lips. He moaned, a deep, throaty sound, and his tongue roamed her mouth. Francine gripped his back, pulled him onto her. She broke their connection, rested her cheek against the pillow, and offered her neck.

Rueben tasted her skin, and his cock pressed on her slit, the touch almost tipping her over the precipice.

“Take me,” she begged. “Please, take me.”

His teeth sunk into her vein, and her body convulsed, desire spinning through her. She clamped him against her, held the back of his head as he tried to draw away. He struggled then slumped, his weight heavy on her slender form, and she screamed out her orgasm and satisfaction.

Francine pushed him off her with inhuman strength. He rolled beside her onto his back. Blood smeared his chin, and his unseeing eyes stared at the ceiling, his face bleached of colour, scars more prominent. Desire spun through her still, and she leaped off the bed and across the room. She flung open the door, dashed downstairs, dirt and grit stabbing her bare feet.

His scent lured her to him. Chinock sat in the darkness of a living room, his beautiful profile once again tinted by moonlight through the undressed window. He turned his head, and a fanged smile greeted her.

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She gasped, her demonic calling a weight in her chest, and breathed, "It's your turn."