

Sunset: Craig's Embrace

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The streaming red-orange remains of day extinguished below the horizon, leaving a deep indigo band across the sky. The visual cacophony of sunset ceased with such immediacy that the resulting "silence" almost muffled the roar of the city below. A city awakening, transforming into another entity - "The City at Night" was altogether different from "The City at Day."

From such a vantage point, so far above the City, it would be impossible to imagine Night as anything more than a gentle and comforting friend. Lover. The sweet form that contours to a body asleep - the mask of Darkness that frees the other senses from the tyranny of sight. The horrors that staggered through the streets below would be unthinkable from such a vantage point. An unwelcome image quickly banished from an innocent mind.

But then who is allowed the opportunity to witness the blossoming of Night in such splendour? The gods, perhaps. A few birds. The occupants of looming west-facing office skyscrapers on the outskirts of downtown, bathed in florescent light and frantically punching buttons, scribbling notes, and pushing bytes back and forth across the country? Surely not - their high-ranking stations most likely preclude their ability to appreciate a sunset.

No, the lamentable fact is, that for the inhabitants of the City, the horizon in which the sun takes rest is hidden behind a wall of concrete, the rays of fire overwhelmed by unnatural light. In a world robbed of the beauty of Night, Darkness is to be feared and its citizens obey.

On this Night, however, one citizen escaped the City. Not the geographical location, but the premise on which the entity grew. Is a Place ever solely a location? It is a pity that his experience of the coming of this Night was dulled by closed doors and pressing deadlines, for had he known that Night Fall would become such an integral part of his identity, he may

have wished to witness it one last time before it was forever denied him.

In fact, the passing of Day slipped by without his ever noticing it. When he finally set down his books and looked up from his desk, it was already well into Night. He was alone, as was usually the case - although he was indifferent to Night, he had an increasing disdain for Morning, and preferred to avoid it altogether. Passing through empty halls, he reached the building's outer door where he met the security guard he had arranged to escort him across campus. It wasn't safe for anyone to walk alone at Night, even at the University. Who knew what lurked in the Dark?

"Hey Craig. You're really late tonight. You got that problem worked out yet?"

"No," he hesitated over the name, "No, I don't yet. It's really starting to get to me." *What was his name? He's met me so many times...*

"You oughta take some time off, you know? That's what you need. A break. So you can come back at it in a new direction. A new start, you know?"

"Yeah, sure. You're right." *What is this guy talking about? He doesn't even know what I study!*

Craig despised having to keep up his end of the small talk on these trips to his car. They always tried to get him to talk about his work - as if they'd be able to follow his theories! Stunted people trying to salve their own shortcomings through acquaintances. Now the guard was telling Craig something about his cousin Delula (or something like that) and her break down last summer... *How is that even related to me?* Craig thought. *Thank god, here's the car!*

"Well, thanks a lot for seeing me to my car..." shit, the name again... "I'll see you next time."

"Sure thing Craig. Take it easy!"

Craig was not known for his compassion. But having been told time and time again of your genius and brilliance, was likely to give anyone a superiority complex. Craig was

citizen of the City, in all senses of the word. Perhaps, he wouldn't mind having missed this his last chance to see the sunset. In all his life, he hadn't seen it. Not really anyway. How could you mind losing something you never had?

Never once had it occurred to him as he drove away in his car, that the security guard who's name he could never be bothered to remember, walked back to the guard station alone. Alone in the Dark.

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Craig never really wanted for anything as he grew up - his was an exceedingly normal childhood. His family was upper-middle class; he wasn't burdened with the cost of his education nor his recreation. His tragedies and triumphs were no less, no more, painful or exhilarating than any other citizen of the City. In these respects, Craig was unexceptional. His only real asset was his mind, which was, in all humility, something above the ordinary. His keen understanding of logic and mathematics had earned him the position that he currently enjoyed in the Department of Physical Science at the University, but it had also ingrained into his personality a deplorable air of condescension that had ensured his independent lifestyle.

His appearance, too, was unremarkable although a trained eye would be able to discern that potential lay beneath the surface. A little more concern for the body, and little more lightness of spirit would be enough to allow his natural beauty to show through. But, as he was, the signs of stress were already apparent upon his face and the way he carried his body. Time would not be kind to Craig.

He was of average height, and of an academic build. I.e. he studied too much to work out, but fortunately also studied too much to overeat either, resulting in that slender, lanky figure with the pasty complexion that can often be found in the bowels of a library. He was still quite young - only 22. He had graduated highschool at 16, allowing him to finish his BSc by 20, and he was allowed to directly enter the PhD

program based on merit. Despite this, only Craig's hair betrayed his youth - it was intended to be short, but seemed perpetually in dire need of a trim. An errant cowlick in the front persisted in flopping directly in front of his face, giving him a somewhat reckless and unruly air. In fact, on the rare occasion when the mouth beyond the bangs was not pursed in concentration and actually curled into a smile, it might even be said that the cowlick made Craig appear romantically dashing.

Craig had had lovers. Even a girlfriend or two; at least for a few months each. He was an attentive and, considering his age, quite talented lover but that was largely because he approached sex in much the way that he approached his work and ultimately the rest of his life. Study first, be thorough, and leave no variables unaccounted for. It was his love-making that generally maintained the few relationships he had, but his partners quickly realized their priority level in Craig's life, and moved on. Craig barely noticed. Sex was always easy to find in the City.

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In fact, it was his libido that drove Craig off the expressway and into the heart of the City this Night. He headed towards "The Haven", a goth bar where he knew the women were attracted to his pale, lean, and angst-ridden type.

He strode up to the door with easy confidence and threw it open. Well, no, not quite threw - the door was made of heavy oak - but he managed to open it wider than most patrons who generally squeezed in as soon as the gap would allow them. The inside was Darker even than the Night outside that was illuminated by countless streetlights and neon signs. The combination of sudden Darkness, pounding music, and the stench of heat, moisture, and alcohol saturated sweat that escaped through the open door sent a rush of adrenaline through Craig's body. He stepped forward before his eyes had completely adjusted to the new light level; he knew the way to the bar. It extended across the wall a few steps to the left of

the entrance and overlooked the black and white checked, sunken dance floor that comprised the larger part of the room. The ceiling was very high - perhaps 30 feet - creating the illusion that the room was actually much more narrow than it was. The lighting, for the most part came from black lights strewn liberally about.

"Long Island Ice-Tea." He paid the bartender when his drink was delivered. He turned around while leaning against the bar in a way that suggested he was rolling over in bed. He sipped his ice tea and finally favoured the crowd with his appraising eye.

It wasn't terribly crowded, but then it was a weekday. There were maybe fifty or so androgynous, black clad bodies writhing about to the Dark strains of music blaring from the speakers erected at each corner of the dance floor. But that wasn't where he'd find what he was looking for. He let his eyes drift across the far wall where there were assorted tables, chairs and couches clustered. Where he'd be more likely to find someone here alone.

No prospects to the right. He scanned past the stairs that led down to pool tables on the floor below, to the tables on the left. He could make out a few lone figures hunched over the tables, but he was too far away to even make out their sex. He casually pushed himself off the bar and moved in that direction. There was a short passage, directly opposite the entrance of the bar, that ended in a closed door. He knew that more existed beyond it than a service area, because he had often seen individuals coming and going during previous visits. But the one time he's tried to enter, he simply found the door unyielding. The regulars seemed to steer clear of it. As he walked by, Craig found himself imagining all sorts of bizarre goings-on behind the door.

By the time he reached the tables, two of the loners had already gone to rejoin their friends on the dance floor, and the third he discovered was a man. Only slightly discouraged, he slid into an old chair of faded and threadbare, red velvet and steeled himself to wait.

Half an hour passed without incident. His drink nearly finished, Craig was just about ready go check out the pool tables, when suddenly a man emerged from the passage and headed for the bar. He was dressed completely in black - nothing unusual for this place - and had a head of short-cropped hair that matched in colour. He was wearing leather, and Craig wondered how he could stand it - the bar was nearly too hot for the light turtle-neck Craig was wearing, let alone the well padded bomber jacket the stranger wore. Craig's curiosity got the best of him - he had to get a closer look at this mystery that had come from the "back room". Fortunately, his now empty drink gave him the perfect excuse.

Craig sidled up to the bar, another patron between him and the stranger. He noticed that the stranger hadn't actually ordered anything - he seemed engrossed by the movements on the dance floor. The bartender brought a drink to the young girl beside him, and turned to ask Craig's order. Now, he had an unobstructed view of the man from behind the door.

He was indeed dressed completely in black - black jeans, black T-shirt, open black leather jacket, black leather hiking boots. He was nearly half a foot shorter than Craig, but clearly quite a bit heavier due to his bulk. He clearly worked out. His skin was pale - again nothing unusual for this bar, especially when you took the black light into account. His face was lean and angular. Craig nearly missed the stud in his ear - it was so small - but it caught his eye when it flashed with the life only found in real diamonds. The stranger's left hand - the only hand Craig could see - sported two delicate and intricately carved silver rings. There was a silver rose on a leather thong around his neck.

At first glance, one might have even mistaken this enigmatic young man, as the biker type, but this up-close examination revealed that his jeans were new and crisply black; the leather was far from the cheap, stiff, leather that bikers usually favoured - it looked as though it would melt in your mouth. And his choice of jewellery demonstrated more taste - and resources - than the usual biker fare of skulls and chain.

Moved by the music, the man closed his eyes, subtly moving to the beat. Craig took the opportunity to examine his face closer. Again he was surprised to see that the man's superficially harsh features gave way to softer aspects. His eyelashes, for example. They were thick and long, and of course jet black. Craig found himself staring.

As if he could feel Craig's eyes on him, the man turned slightly, his eyes still closed, and raised his head. He suddenly opened his eyes and caught and held Craig's gaze. Disarmed and surprised, Craig quickly turned away, grabbed the untouched drink the bartender had already left in front of him, and hurried back towards the tables.

When he was safely back in the old velvet chair, he risked a glance at the stranger who was still leaning against the bar. He was staring directly at Craig. When he saw Craig glance in his direction, he got up and started walking towards him.

Oh shit! He thinks I was interested in him. Craig thought, annoyed at his own carelessness. As the stranger approached, Craig looked up at him, and neither bothered to avert their eyes.

"Mind if I sit down?" His voice was a soft tenor - full of confidence, but without pretension.

"Look, I didn't mean to give you the wrong impression at the bar, but you're not really my type." The man responded with a quizzical look. "You know... I'm into innies, not outies?" He just laughed softly and sat down.

"There are more kinds of companionship than just sexual ones," he said when he was seated, his eyes flashing. "And at the moment, you don't seem to be having any luck with any of them." He finished his statement by expanding his smile. Craig wasn't sure how to react. The man was certainly charming - enough so that Craig nearly forgot that he should be annoyed at the uninvited audacity of this strange individual. He quickly recovered.

Craig leaned, back folding his arms across his chest and said, wryly, "And just what sort of companionship are you looking for, pray tell?"

The stranger's face momentarily stiffened slightly. "Eternal," he replied, and again he relaxed into a soft smile.

"And you think you'll find it in me?" Craig scoffed. "I don't know. In you, I see potential."

By now, Craig was amused. This was the strangest pick up scene he'd ever been party to. *Ok, I'll pay along*, he thought to himself. There was a brief silence that Craig finally broke.

He grinned and leaned forward conspiratorially, "So. What's there to be seen in the back room? I saw you come out from there."

"Ah well. You see, that's a secret." He pressed his index finger to his lips. It was a strangely sensual action. "But, it's kind of a private club. Very, very exclusive," he continued, his eyes glimmering playfully.

"Exclusive in what way?"

"Well, let's just say you've got to have the right blood-lines." Craig cocked a suspicious eyebrow and the man continued. "If you're interested, I could give you something that would allow you entry."

"In return for what?"

"You're very pragmatic. Yes of course there's always a price, isn't there. In return for spending the night with me."

Oh, here we go. I knew it was going to come around to this eventually.

Craig was almost disappointed. This encounter had started out interesting.

"I see. I told you, I'm not that way inclined."

"And I told you, there are more kinds of companionship than sex. This isn't about sex. This is beyond sex. This is about bonding and togetherness."

As he spoke, Craig stared into his eyes. His Dark, Dark, black eyes. The purple of the black lights reflected slightly in his pupils, and for some reason, Craig found it utterly engrossing.

"This is about sharing time and space and creating a meaningful relationship that is not based on sex. This is about friendship, but beyond friendship as well. Are you interested in

that?"

Craig was numb; he could hear the pounding base of the music all around him, but the man's voice cut through it and held him raptured. He felt like he was falling asleep. The bar around him faded away and all he could see was this man's eyes. Craig had never felt so alone in his life, he nearly cried out with the pain and emptiness that he suddenly felt. But the eyes. And the voice. They reached out towards him like a life preserver to a drowning man. Without much conscious effort, Craig finally heard him self respond, water welling up in his eyes,

"Yes. Yes." And his mind was suddenly bathed in such glorious wellness and joy, he collapsed on the table in rapture.

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"Would you like something to drink?"

Craig blinked. He was sitting on a couch in a strange apartment and he was momentarily disoriented the way one in deep thought can unthinkingly arrive at their goal and not be sure how they got there. He dredged his memory and managed to call up the bar, the bike ride here, and the enigmatic stranger in whose apartment he now found himself.

"Yeah. You got any coffee?"

"Cappuccino?"

"That'd be great." The man busied himself behind the bar, and Craig surveyed the room.

It was Darkly beautiful - completely decorated in shades of silver-blue, indigo, and black. The walls were traditionally bordered with ornate moulding, and the style tended towards a late French Renaissance style. Was that a Picasso? Craig was relieved he'd been wearing black; if he hadn't, he'd have felt guilty for marring the decor. He leaned back against the back of the couch and closed his eyes. Wow, velvet. He ran his hands over the upholstery. He took a deep breath and for the first time noticed a subtle sweet incense in the room.

He was jerked out of his reverie by a horrible scream - the sound of boiling steam being injected into milk. He pushed

himself up.

The man in behind the indigo marble bar finished scooping out the froth and turned with a single cup. He moved from the behind the bar and strode up to Craig.

"Your coffee," he said, looking down at Craig from above. Craig met his gaze and took the cup.

"Thanks." The man sat down in a plush chair across the black laquer coffee table from Craig.

"I'm sorry, but I don't even know your name," Craig began.

"Don't you remember? You asked me as we left the bar."

Craig forced his reluctant memory to recall the incident. That's right he had. And he'd heard the response too; but it seemed to have slid right off his brain the second he'd heard it.

"Oh yeah. Sorry."

"That's alright."

There was an uncomfortable silence, so Craig sipped his coffee and let his eyes stray once more around the room. The moment of joy he had felt in the bar came back to Craig finally, and he broke the silence.

"So tell me more about your 'eternal relationship.'"

He smiled, "Between a man and a woman - if there's love - there can be a magical moment at the climax of passion when their two souls touch and merge aided by a potent catalyst passed between bodies. Man to woman, woman to man. It's even possible between a man and man, or a woman and a woman if proper conditions are met. And if there's love.

"But the catalysts produced in love-making, while potent, are transient. They only last for one glorious moment, and then immediately fade."

"And there's a more long-lasting... catalyst?"

"To be sure. Permanent in fact. Eternal."

What am I doing here? I still don't even know this guy's name and he's talking about spending eternity with me? But the gears had been set in motion, and Craig found himself irresistibly drawn to the mystery. And to the promise of

never being alone - he flashed back to the feeling of joy that caused him to agree to come here in the first place. Against his better judgement, the words tumbled from his mouth.

"And what might that be?"

The face across from him suddenly hardened and he leaned forward in his chair. Craig could almost hear the bass rumblings of the word precede it's actual annunciation and when it finally came forth, it had the power of a steam train.

"Blood."

The word reverberated within Craig's head, even as he felt the panic welling up in his chest. In an eye blink, the stranger was beside Craig on the couch, pressed against his body. He was trapped and he started to push the man away in fear, but it was like pushing on stone. He finally dared to look at his assailant; the expression remained intense, but had softened. Craig calmed slightly.

Craig watched him slowly raise his hand to Craig's face. Fingers traced along the edge of his cheek so slightly that Craig might have been able to convince himself they hadn't contacted at all, if it hadn't been for the reaction it caused within him. The man's touch seemed charged with fire and Craig felt a heat rush into him that relaxed and excited him all at once.

The hand slowly moved back past Craig's ear and around behind his jaw line. It gently followed the contours of his neck until it paused over the ever so slightly protruding flow of life-blood that coursed mere millimetres below his skin. Suddenly Craig was aware of his own racing heart beat; the man's finger seemed to act as a resonator and it was as if Craig's pulse was amplified at the point of contact and projected back into his body creating an all pervading pounding that quickly became all Craig could perceive.

He was vaguely aware of movement beside him, but the pounding in his ears that had erased his vision didn't allow him more than that vague awareness. He could feel increasing pressure on his neck, but he felt nothing as slivers of ivory pierced those mere millimetres and sought to release the tempest building in Craig's body.

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"Wake up, my lovely." The words were muffled as if they had finally arrived from a long journey across rice pudding and dragged Craig's mind back across the same route with them. Why was he so tired? He managed to weakly open his eyes enough to see his ... lover? looking gently down at him. His lips glistened wetly red.

"You've a choice now. You are very close to death. I'm sure you can feel it's soft folds reaching out enticing you to sleep. You can allow that sweetness to embrace you, or you can choose to be with me. And we can be together forever - as close to being a single person as this world allows. Will you be with me?"

Craig tried to think but, superior intellect or not, in his diminished state he couldn't rationalize. Indeed, he could feel the soft, Dark, sweetness calling him to sleep and it was compelling. But finally he fixated on the soft smile that seemed to radiate through the Dark. *What could be more sweet than that smile?* He mustered his strength and managed to nod in acceptance of eternity.

He felt a finger against his lips. It was moist. His tongue flicked out and touched the finger and his lips and he sensed a slightly iron taste. It was blood. His own blood, transformed within the body of the vampire and when the first drop was finally absorbed and reached what remained of his weakened bloodstream, the effect was electric. Light flashed across the inside of Craig's eyelids and his entire nervous system reacted involuntarily. With preternatural swiftness, Craig sat bolt upright grasping the now passive vampire's head between his hands. He all but tore out the man's throat as he desperately clamoured for another taste of that blood. He was rewarded with a strong gush and his mouth grappled onto the pulsing wound pulling it's burning heat into his starved body.

As the vampire's essence - his very life blood - flowed into the far reaches of Craig's system transforming the cells within, this first reflex reaction faded and an awareness

developed in Craig's mind. Not only was fluid passing from body to body, but images, emotions, and memories came forth as well, carried on the blood. Craig reeled from the sheer vastness of experience that overwhelmed him - approximately fifteen times his own. He could barely pickup on the odd picture or snatch of remembered conversation, let alone process it all.

Even as the blood energized his whole body, he began to fatigue as vast amounts of energy were already being spent on the rending, splitting, and renewal that was occurring within him on a microscopic level. The cravings finally abated enough to allow him to relax into a steady rhythm of long draughts, just letting the images wash over him instead of trying to consciously recall everyone of them. He could have almost dozed off, as content as a new born babe, suckling its mother's breast.

But, the figure below him was no longer completely passive. Craig could feel the flow of blood slowing and the vampire twisted his head and placed his lips on Craig's neck in an intimate caress. Suddenly, Craig felt the sharp pain as his skin was pierced one more time. The pain, though slight, was enough to jar him out his revery and filled him with an almost sexual apprehension and excitement. He could feel the blood in his mouth come more forcefully, as his own body supplied replenishment.

A voice floated over his consciousness, as fleeting as a thought, but one Craig new, didn't not come from him. He wasn't alone. Obviously he wasn't alone in the room, but in a much more profound way, he wasn't alone - in his own body he shared everything he had come to know as him. And at the same time he could feel his own spirit expand into more than space than it was allotted before, allowed to travel through the circuit blood between them.

"I love you," the voice said. And then it was as if someone physically reached up to his brain and began massaging his pleasure centers.

"I love you, too," Craig managed to psychically stammer before he succumbed to abject ecstasy.

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Craig opened his eyes. Despite that all he saw was the ceiling, he knew that the world had changed in no insignificant way. The pattern of stucco completely absorbed his attention as he saw it with new non-human eyes. It was still precisely the same stucco that had been there the day before (indeed a lot longer than that!) but for the first time, he could see more than the narrow perceptual band restrictions on mere flesh and blood optic organs. There were underlying patterns - of energy... of being... of connectedness to the world around. He couldn't describe it adequately, even in his own mind, simply because his mind had never encountered such information before. The plaster seemed to move, yet not move, in a state of constant flux, but with a stable physical center. *Weird*.

It was then, that the enormity of his circumstances crashed upon him. Had he really just been bled, fed, and transformed by a vampire? The mind that had been raised on hard science - the mind that Craig had known all his life - kicked in and said, "Don't be ridiculous. They don't exist." But here was Craig's new mind - fresh and tingling with new perceptions - staring at a pulsating ceiling and being utterly fascinated. He ran his tongue over his upper teeth and let out a little cry of surprise as he slashed his own flesh on razor-sharp bicuspids. A short spurt of blood escaped into his mouth before the scratch closed of its own accord, and the tangy flavour brought to mind his recent experience. The little cry of surprise was subsequently followed by an internal scream of agony as a rigid and neat world of order and science crashed to rubble and chaos like a tower of stone struck by lightning. To accept the existence of vampires... or worse yet, to accept that he, himself, was a vampire, required accepting a world of superstition and magic - a world without logic and that was far too much for Craig's scientific mind. He lay on a bed, fully clothed, but psychologically naked, vulnerable as a child in a wood at Night.

As he writhed about on the bed, his mind polarizing into to completely distinct identities, he tried to objectively search

himself - his thoughts, his feelings, his memory - for some anchor upon which he could begin to rebuild a life now shattered.

There was something. Deep, deep in the center of his being - no - it was all pervading, like the blood itself. Wasn't it? He had trouble trying to focus on the location of the feeling, but it was as surely there as his own mind. It was the vampire, come father. Brother. Lover. The vampire was still with him in a very real and profound sense. His father's memories, thoughts, and feelings were no longer accessible, but the presence was undeniably there.

He calmed, and given this latest piece of evidence, the "new mind" gained ground in the battle for supremacy in Craig's head, and summarily told the old to "just cope." Craig began to imagine his new life in conjunction with the creature he had just encountered and was beginning to feel excitement at the possibilities that presented themselves. He wasn't alone and nothing was more important than that fact.

He turned his focus back on his old life that seemed so far away now. Had it really only been hours since he had been a living, breathing human-being? Seeing himself as he had been suddenly gave him cause for remorse. *Gerald. Gerald's his name.* Craig cringed at the cruelty that he could so clearly see now. He pitied the child that he had been until this Night, but he gradually realized that he couldn't mourn him. To be sure the physics student was gone, but perhaps that wasn't really such a bad thing. He had been transformed nearly as much by love, as he had been by the blood. And even more startling, Craig suddenly discovered that he did, indeed, have a soul. He relaxed and again engrossed in the ceiling, he contemplated his new world.

The Night's shocks weren't over yet, however, for as Craig started to come to grips with the metamorphosis he had undergone, the anchor he founded his new strength upon, slipped out from under him.

Suddenly, and without warning the presence of the vampire evaporated, tearing itself from the blood to which it had belonged. Shocked, and unprepared, Craig just gaped upward. And suddenly, inexplicably, he knew that his sire was dead.

Seizing the opportunity, Craig's old, logical mind brusquely took control before he was completely ripped apart by emotion. It found strength in Craig, himself. His new body, his new perceptions, and his new abilities. Craig hardened himself against the loss though he knew it would be a long, long time before he would come not to feel it - perhaps it would take eternity itself.

With a touch of melancholy, Craig stepped up and opened the indigo drape that covered the window. The view of the City spread out some twenty floors below him in an incredible panorama. He didn't feel just physically above the City, he felt that in some way he had lost his membership in it. But that caused him no pain. As he looked over the light bound streets, still teeming with cars, and peered through the windows of the apartment building next door, it was finally clear to him what the City represented.

The City robbed people of their dreams, their compassion, and their love. Its concrete mass and steel and glass towers weighed so heavily on their hearts and minds that it suppressed their humanity. And the weight had crushed more than one individual turning them into monsters. Craig had been a monster. He could see that now. But he had found someone that had lifted him out of the rubble that had been suffocating the life from him, and elevated him out above the City to where he could even see the horizon.

A horizon that will always remain Dark. So be it. It's a small price to pay. He was grateful.

The logical mind realized that it knew nothing about this world, fresh and new. Craig felt like the child he had never really been. He felt so many things - excitement, hope, faith... already, a little loss. And deep within, a burning Hunger. It wasn't conscious yet, but it soon would be.

He thought about the vampire whose name had been

deliberately hidden from him and Craig was grateful that this side of his mind was strong enough to hold down the other until the emotions were a little less overwhelming and he could face them properly.

He was alone again. Alone in the Dark.

But, he realized, I'm no longer afraid of the Dark.