

London Nights

Book 1: The Lost Boy

Von Ulysses

Kapitel 3: Drawing Room Conversations

While Richard and Kearon were sharing this moment high under the roof of Whitechurch Manor, Velkan and Myra had managed to gather the other inhabitants of the house in the drawing room on the ground floor. Once everyone was settled, Velkan explained the situation.

As he mentioned the newcomer's race, Sydney sat up. His red velvet robe rustled as if fell around him on the chaiselongue. Velkan had interrupted him and Castor at a rather inopportune moment.

While Sydney had decided to throw on the dramatic robe, Castor was sitting there in nothing but a pair of boxers. His ginger hair cascaded around his face and down to his broad chest, and all of his impressive tattoos were on full display due to his lack of clothing. Velkan could clearly tell that Myra desperately tried not to gawk. She definitely was gawking, though, clutching her soda glass a little too tightly. She had confided in Velkan about her crush on the kelpie and she knew it would never go anywhere but moments like this were hard on the poor girl.

"He's a what?!" Sydney asked.

"You heard me, Syd, he's a Bashee but a male one."

"Have you lost your mind? Or rather, you and the pup?" He threw up his hands melodramatically.

"Aren't you overreacting a little?"

"Overreacting? You let a Banshee into this house." Sydney brushed one of his thick dark curls back behind his right horn. "That's your bad influence, Velkan. I blame you, just to make that clear."

"What have I done now?"

"You brought in the vagabond! And now the puppy thinks we're some kind of shelter."

"Did you just compare me to some street rat?" Jonathan groaned and took a sip from the whisky he had just gotten for himself before sitting down.

Unlike Sydney and Castor, Jonathan was fully dressed in a worn-out black shirt of a metal band that Velkan had never heard of, jeans and heavy combat boots. His shoulder-length blonde hair was tied up into a messy bun.

Myra hadn't mentioned where he had been when she came looking for him but Velkan found that sometimes he preferred not to know. He allowed his lover the space he needed.

"Well, your outfit makes it hard to tell the difference." Sydney said sweetly, ignoring the stretched up middle finger Jonathan gave him.

"Well, I think... I mean... I think it's a marvellous opportunity. I think he would be invaluable to my studies and..."

"Don't you think we should let him have a hot meal and maybe a bath first, then start experimenting on him?" Castor winked at Myra who blushed and held up her hands in mock surrender.

"Bad idea!" Sydney interceded. "Give him food and he'll think we actually want him here."

"We already had crisps with him." Myra said a little quieter than usual. She wasn't Sydney's biggest fan, though she stood up bravely to the glare he gave her.

"Fine. His belly is full. Give him some money and out with him!" Sydney rolled his golden eyes.

"You know that he isn't Death personified, right? He's not going to go all Seventh Seal on you and challenge you to a game of chess for your soul." Velkan smirked.

"He is such a geek." Sydney groaned directed at Jonathan who simply shrugged and smiled affectionately. "You're damn lucky that you're also hot, Velkan." He turned back towards him. "And I know he's not Death personified but close enough!"

"He's probably more afraid of us than you are of him." Castor said and tapped Sydney's hand encouragingly.

"Famous last words."

"He didn't deny that he's afraid, did you all notice?" Jonathan chuckled over the rim of his whisky tumbler.

"I'm more afraid of anything you might lend him to wear than the boy himself." Sydney's eyes narrowed.

"So you'd prefer I'd lend him something from your closet?"

"Jonathan, darling, I wouldn't risk it. I'm pretty sure you'd spontaneously combust if you touched anything other than cheap polyester."

"You could take him shopping." Castor seemed adamant to change Sydney's mind. Velkan admired the kelpie's determination, especially with a man like his horned lover. Sydney was as beautiful as he was stubborn.

"I wouldn't want to leave Syd alone with him. He'd come back with 15 new outfits and the poor boy would be on a one-way flight to Timbuktu." Velkan quipped.

"You guys can't be serious. None of you knows what it means to live on the street." Everyone turned to find Richard in the doorway of the drawing room. The young fae had crossed his arms in front of his chest and glared at them.

"It's impolite to sneak up on people!" Sydney groaned.

"Especially when it means hearing you being callous, eh?" Jonathan put down his tumbler.

"You called him a street rat." Richard said, his voice making it clear that he was just as disappointed by Jonathan as he was by everyone else.

"It's also impolite to listen in." Jonathan mumbled, drawing a short dry laugh from Sydney.

"Do you think this is funny?" Richard shook his head. "I can't believe you guys. There is a teenage boy up there who was sleeping in a goddamn old factory. On the floor between barrels and rusty equipment. And you want to throw him back out?" Sydney sighed. "Listen, puppy, you're right. I don't know what it means to live on the street. Nor will I ever. However, that doesn't mean we have to open our doors to death."

"He is not death!" Richard raised his voice. "Stop saying that. He's lost. He's alone! And if you guys don't care for him, I will! And Tariq, too." With that, he turned around and

stormed off, his footsteps thumping on the stairs.

"Of course, Tariq too." Jonathan said with a smile. "He would do anything for our puppy."

"He's right though." Velkan hated seeing Richard so upset. This whole situation could have been handled better. It stood as a reminder to the fact that he had none of the talent for negotiation and persuasion that made his younger brother such an excellent politician.

"No one should be lost and alone." he added.

"I get it." Sydney stood up, gesturing around the room. "We all know the puppy has you two wrapped around his finger." He pointed at Castor and Velkan. "Myra already pictures the experiments she could do with the death fairy and you." Jonathan raised his eyebrows expectantly. "I actually don't know what you are thinking most of the time and thank the Gods for that. Majority rules and I lose."

"Might do you some good." Velkan said quietly.

He loved Sydney, he really did. Velkan and the horned demi-god shared a bond of deep affection and Velkan would always be grateful for the time during which Sydney had been there for him when Velkan himself had been lost. Not physically but emotionally. And during that time, Sydney had helped Velkan find himself, be the man he was today. His unorthodox methods had included a lot of rough and passionate sex but one couldn't argue with the results. Still, sometimes Sydney needed a reminder that this was a family, not his Royal Household.

"Just get used to it." Jonathan leaned into the cushions of the Victorian sofa.

"I will, but not dressed like this. I'm going shopping. In Paris."

"What? You're leaving?!" Castor stood up, too. His boxers had slipped a little, revealing a glimpse of his lower back which almost caused Myra to drop her glass.

"I'm already gone." Sydney brushed past Velkan, his robe dancing around him. "You can call me when you came to your senses." He left the room without a look back, followed by Castor who chased after him. Moments later the muffled sounds of the two men arguing on the first floor landing could be heard.

"This house is such a dysfunctional mess. The transhee will fit right in." Jonathan chuckled.

"Don't call him that to his face, ever." Velkan growled.

"You should know me better, wolf." Jonathan smiled but his voice betrayed his nonchalance. "I'm an arsehole, but I'm not cruel."

"So you're for letting him stay?"

"Is kicking him out even an option? Come on, the fact that he's messes up Syd that much is reason enough to let him stay already."

Velkan chuckled and blew his boyfriend a kiss. Jonathan didn't show it but he cared more than he would ever let on and Velkan knew that by now. The real Jonathan Bouchard, the man he loved so much.

The extensive garden of Whitechurch Manor was quiet at this hour, no birds were singing, no insects humming even the fountains were turned off, the water in the overgrown ponds calm like a mirror which reflected the moonlight and the warm glow of the windows of the house. Castor did his best but he was just one Kelpie against nature so most of the garden was a colourful wilderness which would have given any proper British gardener a stroke. However, it added to the mysterious air of the

property.

Whitechurch Manor itself loomed like a dark entity in its centre. Most of the mansion was dark and strangely foreboding, with only the light behind the windows of the part which was still lived in serving as reminder that a haven of life remained in those old walls.

Jonathan walked among the gravelly pathways and stopped here and there to squat down. He liked being in the garden from time to time and not only because he was allowed to smoke here.

Getting away from the buzzing community within Whitechurch Manor felt relaxing. At least sometimes. He drew on his cigarette and blew a ring of smoke into the night air. The peace didn't last long as he heard footsteps approach on the gravel of the path.

"There're three more bags in the main hall."

"Yes, sir."

"And the chest on the stairs."

"Yes... sir."

"Not to rush you but I'd like to be gone before the banshee starts shrieking. Should I leave you ear plugs? They won't help but at least you'll die trying."

Jonathan watched as the butler staggered off towards the garage while carrying several large suitcases.

Sydney had spotted him among the rose garden and came over, his long coat flowing behind him.

"You woke him up for this? Steven will poison your tea one of these days. And since when are you travelling with so much luggage?"

"Who knows if the house still stands when I come back?" The horned demi-god snapped the cigarette out of the corner of Jonathan's mouth and drew on it. He choked and coughed, holding it back towards Jonathan.

"Zut alors! How can you smoke this garbage?!"

"You're welcome." Jonathan shrugged and put the cigarette back in his mouth. "So you're really leaving?"

Sydney waved theatrically. "Oui, bien sur. And so should you, if you ask me. You're not keen on this mess either."

"I'm not."

"Then come with me. Matthias sure wouldn't complain. You two could enjoy the joie de vivre while I'm shopping." Sydney smirked, showing his pearly white perfect teeth. The mere mention of the vampire sent a pleasurable shiver down Jonathan's spine. Though they were just friends now, the memories of those nights spent in blood-stained passion lingered.

"Pass. I'll stay."

"Have it your way then. It's your funeral." Sydney wrapped himself tighter in his coat.

"What are you doing out here?"

"Smoking."

"And that?" Sydney nodded towards a crystal which poked out of Jonathan's coat pocket.

"Oh, just a project of mine." Jonathan smirked and squatted down to finish drawing a rune on a stone which he placed in the flowerbed next to the crystal from his pocket. A spark of purple energy flared up just as more crystals began to glow all over the grounds. Their light rose up and formed a crackling dome over the house before fading away.

"You've been a busy bee." Sydney said though his voice was completely unfazed.

Jonathan knew that this was a backhanded compliment, even though Sydney would never admit that. "Any reason you're setting up a ward around the house?"

"Just a precaution."

"I see." Sydney made no effort to hide the triumph in his voice. "You sneaky bastard."

"Nothing sneaky about it. I just like to cover my bases. The puppy is way too trusting and even though I doubt that the boy is a threat, you never know what he might bring to our doorstep. As I said, just a precaution."

"Then why didn't you side with me?"

"To what end? To bring Velkan up against me? I might have my doubts but I might also just be a paranoid son of a bitch who can't make a leap of faith and trust someone in need of help. The boy might be just what Richard says: A lost soul."

"Well, knock yourself out then, I'm off. I have a private jet to catch. Au revoir." Sydney walked a few steps down the path before stopping. "Stay safe, vagabond. And keep them safe."

"I will. And you stay safe, too, coward."

Sydney glared at him over his shoulder. "If that was supposed to change my mind, better luck next time. I have a reservation for an opulent breakfast at my favourite brasserie in a few hours. Try not to die when that thing starts to scream."

Jonathan watched the horned Frenchman leave towards the garage before taking a final draw from his cigarette and snipping it onto the gravel. He extinguished it with the heel of his boot and walked back towards the house. Maybe he should have taken Sydney up on the offer.