

Sitting in his office in the Place Louis Lépine, Commissaire de Police Xavier Gilbert pulled a scrap of paper from his worn wallet. Now that he had completed his assignment, his duty was to report to the Doctor. The Doctor had assigned him to track down and eliminate the man whose body was now in the basement, three stories below his office at the Police Headquarters, a task that had proved to be easier than most murder suspect hunts. He had no reason to doubt that the man had been a vicious killer, guilty of all the murders detailed in the report in his safe but seeing the man die had given him little satisfaction. Nevertheless, he still felt the need to punish someone, to exercise the anger that welled in his chest. He hoped that the Doctor would reward him when he reported his success.

He had been carrying the little strip of paper with a single phone number written on it for months, but until the Doctor had called him a week ago, he couldn't remember how came to be in his wallet or why he carried it. It had just appeared when he returned from his stay in the hospital. Then one afternoon, his office phone rang, and the voice of the other end identified herself. Instantly, he remembered everything – his transformation into an immortal, his assignment to wait to serve, and, above all, the Doctor. After the call, he put his other cases aside. Nothing was as important as satisfying the Doctor. He was not just a Commissaire; he was a pivotal member of an elite team tasked with protecting the Doctor and her plans. The man in the morgue, the Enemy, had posed the biggest threat to those plans.

The familiar voice answered the phone on the third ring. "Commissaire Gilbert reporting," he said.

"Commissaire, I trust you are calling because you have good news," the Doctor said in an even tone.

"Yes, Doctor. The Enemy is dead."

"You are absolutely certain on this. He has faked his death on several occasions in the past."

"I was there when his body was pulled from the Seine. As you predicted, the Enemy was plotting something in Sarcelles. Two of my officers chased him from Sarcelles to central Paris. When the fool finally realized what was going on, when he knew he had no escape, the coward killed himself by driving into the river. I saw the EMT declare him dead, although this was hardly necessary since he had been in the water for almost half an hour, and he looked like a limp rag when they got him out.

"Where is the body now?" Even though her voice betrayed no emotion, the Doctor was ecstatic. Actual proof that the greatest threat to her plan for the rise of the vampires had been eliminated virtually ensured her success. Now she could concentrate on growing her hidden army, hiding them in plain sight until they were ready to strike and bring down the government of mortals from within.

"In the morgue at Police Headquarters."

"I want to see it. Can you bring him here?" She cursed herself for the need to see the body of the man who had twice nearly killed her. Still, after the experience in New York when the Graf accepted on faith that the Enemy was dead without seeing the body only to have him reappear and destroy their operation, she was not going to trust anything but her own eyes.

“Impossible. At least for now. The coroner needs to do an autopsy, and then the judge d’instruction must declare him deceased, and the case closed. This review may take several weeks. However, I do have pictures of the body.” Gilbert fingered the stack of crime scene photos that had been delivered to his office.

“Excellent. Bring them here. I expect you by the end of the day.” Seeing his body would have been better, but pictures would have to do. Part of her regretted that the Enemy had not suffered like the Mother Superior and the other members of the Moscow family, but she had to put aside her personal desires for the success of the plan. The Enemy was dead. That was enough.

The Doctor was about the hang up when she heard Gilbert say, “Doctor, there was one other thing you should know.”

“What?” she asked impatiently.

“After we pulled the body out of the water, this strange American teenager appeared and fell over the body crying.”

“An American teenager? An immortal?”

“No, Doctor. Just some Black kid. Seemed to know the Enemy. Called him Scott, which was one of the alias’ we had for him.”

“What have you learned from him?”

“Not much. He doesn’t speak any French, and my English isn’t very good. Mostly he keeps asking for a lawyer.”

Was this kid helping the Enemy, the Doctor wondered. She had often questioned whether the Enemy had help bringing down the Graf, but using a mortal seemed foolish. She would need to interrogate him personally. “Just what we would expect from an American. What did you do with him?”

“I stashed him with Claude at a cheap hotel I know. Didn’t want him showing up in our files until I knew what you wanted to do with him.”

“Commissaire, you are clever. I knew you were perfect for this assignment. Change of plan. Don’t come here. Fetch the boy and take him to the lab. I will meet you there. And get rid of any record of the boy before you come.”

The Princess had not let any emotion enter her voice during her call, but after hanging up the phone, she could not contain herself. “Ingrid!” she called, summoning the matronly woman who served as her majordomo. The stout woman came running.

“Yes, Doctor?”

“Ingrid, we have reason to celebrate. Our great Enemy is dead, drowned like the pathetic rodent he was. Find the finest unsullied buck we have in the stables. I am in a frisky mood!”

“Yes, Doctor,” the unblinking woman replied. The Princess danced across the room, practicing the ballet moves she had studied as a child all those years ago. Everything was coming together, she thought. The Enemy was no more, no longer able to meddle in affairs his small mind could not understand. Why couldn’t he have been more like Ingrid? Ingrid and her husband Alphonse had been the on-site managers of the home when she had purchased it the previous year. After the Princess had completed the purchase, it had been a simple matter to drag the pair one evening and test them for the vampire gene.

Ingrid's test had come back positive, but Alphonse was not a carrier. The Princess had eliminated him and transformed the wife. Ingrid had taken to her new immortal status as if she had always expected it, never once even expressing regret that Alphonse had not been transformed. Ingrid had shown herself to be the perfect administrator, overseeing the conversion of the stables and then personally dealing with the construction crew. When the Princess had asked her if there had been any issues, she replied that she regretted not using a larger team because her needs had barely been satisfied by the five whose blood she had consumed.

While she waited for Ingrid to inform her that preparations were complete, the Princess returned to the report she had been reading when the Commissaire has called. The Egyptians were still behind schedule and were complaining about needing more money. If only everyone were as efficient as Ingrid, she thought, still smiling contentedly.