Blood, Lust, and Eternity

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Summary

Barry Allen is close to uncovering the truth behind a string of odd murders when a striking man with cold eyes and pale skin shows up at his door. Unfortunately for him, this man is the creature he's been tracking, and the monster is out for blood.

~An Eobarry Vampire Alternate Universe.~

Notes

Tagging historical inaccuracy because dialogue is too "modern".

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter Notes

Happy Halloween, Everyone! :) This is a fic I wrote for the holiday. I will be updating over time, so it will last past Halloween, but that can't be helped. I can only edit and write so fast, especially with work and college. I will return to writing my other fic, Synergistic, when this one is finished, hopefully within a few weeks. *Crosses fingers and knocks on wood.*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sunlight poured in through the dust-covered window. The small shack that just passed for a house only had one room, a bed stuffed in the corner, a small table in the other, and a desk near the hearth. Barry Allen sat at this desk, chewing his bottom lip, gazing at the papers scattered underhand, eyes scanning and rescanning the lines and illustrations. He reread the myths, the maps, the newspaper reports, the journal entries he’d copied word for word himself.

“Of course!” He exclaimed aloud. He stood and paced the small abode, mulling the info over in his thoughts. “The east! It’s outside of the city! Miles out there, in the old woods. That’s where it has to be. I wonder just how far…”

He shuffled papers until he stared at the illustration of an ancient manor house. The manor was dark, sprawling, with tall spires and overgrown lawns, a dense fog surrounding it in shadowy grays. No one knew where the manor was, and people claimed it a myth, but Barry had every confidence that he now knew the truth. It was real. It existed, and it belonged to an old resident - a very old resident if his research was accurate - and it was. The map showed an area he didn’t recognize, but using his equations...

*It came from…*

*There…*

He had to admit that he’d accomplished quite a remarkable feat. Piecing together information spanning the last one hundred years at least, all in under a few months, was really quite good.

His stomach growled. He frowned and shook his head. He needed to wait at least another hour before digging into the meager food stores.

He heard a noise like a small rock striking wood and spun around, eyes wide, hand fiddling with the carved wooden cross on the desk. He took a steadying breath and stole over to the window, peering out, up and down the street. It was mostly empty. A single person strode down the far end, heading away. Barry’s heart beat too fast. He sighed and went back to his desk. It was unlikely he was in danger in his own abode. Surely no centuries-old fiend would step into the home of a potential hunter - not when items that gave common men a fighting chance existed in such abundance.

Barry read through his notes again while waiting for the hour to pass. *Just need to gather a little evidence on this area, convince someone to listen, and then we’ll root out this monster for good. It can’t hide in the shadows forever.*
He ate a dinner that consisted of a chunk of bread, a boiled potato sprinkled with salt, and a cup of watery tea made from plants he wasn’t confident were actually fine for tea. He curled onto the shabby mattress. He was hardly sated, but at least he’d had a dinner. He knew what it was like to scrounge or have nothing at all, and if the smith down the street hadn’t taken pity on him and given him some minor jobs, he’d have nothing right now.

One day, that’d change.

With boredom and idleness, his thoughts drifted to memories he often tried not to recall, memories that made him want to frown and smile at the same - made him tingle in ways that nothing else had done since or ever would.

*Warm lips pressed against his, a weight settling against his hips. Calloused but deft hands tugged at his waistband, brushing over his hips-

Barry pushed down his trousers and touched his sensitive skin. He shouldn't want this, but that didn't stop the feeling.

After a few minutes, he climaxed silently and stared hazily at the pathetic excuse for a ceiling. Then again, compared to what he’d already done...this wasn’t anything. It may even help keep those feelings in check... And whatever harm he incurred from it would be deserved anyway, for being this way. He would never marry. No woman could want him after what he'd done...

He cleaned himself. It was growing colder, so he lit a fire in the hearth and fed it to fullness. He opened a book and sat near the flickering flames, reading.

A heavy knock on the door echoed through the room. He jumped and looked up with surprise. He never got visitors. Surely...? He didn’t dare hope, but he did want so badly for this to be someone who had taken notice of his investigation and would reward him for it.

He went to the door and opened it. “Good evenin-”

“You are Barry Allen?” Asked a voice.

Barry found himself gazing into a striking pair of icy eyes set in a pale face under a hood. An odd chill crept up his spine, but he ignored it and nodded. “Yes, that is I. And you are?”

“Professor Thawne,” said the man, eyes locked on him like burrs stuck firmly to his coat. “Professor Eobard Thawne.”

“A most unusual name, Professor Thawne.”

“Yes, well, I am not native to England... But that is irrelevant to the nature of my visit. I heard you were investigating...an assortment of atypical attacks.”

“Oh, right,” Barry said, trying to contain the growing excitement. He adjusted his coat. This was it. “You’re here about my research, then.” He almost shook with hopefulness. No one ever cared about his research.

The professor tilted his head. “...Yes. Of course.”

Barry ushered him in, where Professor Thawne pushed his hood off, revealing sandy locks of hair. The man may have been older, but he really was- “Ah-yes, I’m so glad you’re here, professor! No one listens to me, so it’s nice to see that change... I just need-” He dug through his notes. “Here’s everything.” He tidied it into what he considered the most concise order for practical study.
“Everything?” Professor Thawne asked, glancing over his shoulder. The movement that decreased the distance between them had been unnoticed, but now that Barry did notice it, he was a little put-off. This Professor Thawne was a little ignorant when it came to personal space, it seemed.

But, really, he was too excited to actually let it rouse his agitation. “Certainly,” Barry said, proud. "It's a lot, I know."

“It is a lot.”

Was that an impressed tone? “All the evidence. Let me just give you a rundown. See, it’s always criminals, or inmates of asylums, or the homeless - the kind of folks no one cares about, outcasts - so the police aren’t doing anything.” Barry hesitated, something bothering him. He turned to the visitor. “Are you...here on behalf of the university? I sent that letter two months ago!”

Professor Thawne eyed him in that strange way again, though there was just enough of an angle to his chin that Barry had the strangest feeling he wasn't meeting his eyes. It was almost as if the man had just been staring at his neck. Professor Thawne’s fingers steepled before him. “Yes... We...apologize for...the delay...”

Barry pushed away the unease, and pivoted back to his notes. “Well, no matter. Back to this. The earliest attack can be dated back to the sixteenth century! Two piercings on the victims' necks. The most recent case was a convicted killer about to hang found dead in his cell a week before the sentence was to be carried out. Written off as a freak accident, the investigation was a perfect farce.”

“Why go out of your way for undesirables, Mr. Allen?”

“Because someone has to,” Barry murmured. “Someone has to be willing to care about justice. Someone has to be willing to care about these people, whether they deserve it or not. They are still under the law, and the law doesn’t discriminate. Or, well... It shouldn't. Doesn't stop it from happening, though.” He took a breath. “Either way, the pattern continues, every killing from then until now. The last victim was a few days ago. Charlie Davora, age twenty-three, resident of the Old Hills Asylum... All of these people were killed the same way. Two marks on the neck, bloodstains on the skin...yet barely a drop of blood at the scene, and the bodies had been utterly and inarguably drained, yet everyone laughs me off!” Barry eyed the old newspaper headline. “Vampires,” he breathed, using the word with some wonder. His fingers traced an old illustration of a demon with huge fangs and claws. “Or maybe a single vampire. I can't seem to determine if there’s more than one or not. I can’t wait to prove everyone wrong, regardless. You asked why I care. If I’m right, this vampire needs to be dealt with, regardless of who it’s targeting. Vampires are demons possessing corpses, unnatural and evil-”

“It’s just one.”

Barry looked at him, blank.

“It’s just one vampire,” the professor clarified, “-in this area at least - and no, he’s not a demon walking in a corpse, evil, or unnatural. Just different. Condemnant quod non intellegunt. He hunts the undesirables to keep hunters or Samaritans like yourself from tracking him with as much ease, but you do possess a measure of uncanny intelligence, don't you, Mr. Allen?”

Barry stared at him, furrowing his brow as he tried to process all he'd heard. Anger reared in his chest. “How dare you even suggest that this thing isn't evil-!”

“Living for two thousand years gives you some insight on yourself and everyone else, too, Mr.
Allen.”

Barry’s body went numb. A chill seeped through his veins and he felt goosebumps break out across his body. “You’re...”

Professor Thawne approached him, a smile twisting his face. It was terrifying. “Go on,” he whispered. “Say it. You were quite enjoying the word just a moment ago.”

“V...vampire,” Barry whispered, gulping, mouth dry. His heart began to pound. “You’re the one...the one that’s been... The one...t-that’s been leaving...those victims b-behind...”

“That is correct.”

Barry scrambled, hands flying to the object on the desk. He seized it and held it before him, arms shaking. “I compel you by the power of the cross to stay away!” He snarled.

The monster eyed it for a moment, then sighed. “It’s cute that you think that perpendicular twig will do anything to slow me down. I’m older than the time period that gave that symbol meaning, Mr. Allen. Still, I’m tempted to fall over just to make you think that thing works. You’re naivety is...enticing.”

Barry felt like he was going to be sick. “I...don’t understand. It’s...a cross...” he said helplessly. “You’re a vampire... Why isn't this working!?”

“It is an inanimate object with no use whatsoever but to keep the masses in line.”

The creature took another step forward and Barry stepped back, his back hitting the wall. His heart was beating so fast it almost hurt. His hands shook hard, but he still held the evidently useless symbol before him.

"Atrox melior dulcissima veritas mendaciis..."

Barry shivered.

“Have any other toys to try?” Professor Thawne asked. “Silver bullets? You don’t seem the kind to own a firearm or even know how to use one. Garlic cloves to chuck at me? That one’s a myth, too. Oh - how about my personal favorite? Holy water. That rumor was spread when a priest threw boiling water on one of my kin. As you can imagine that hurt him quite a bit, giving the cowardly clergyman time to flee...” He tilted his head. “I’ll bet you don’t even have a stake, something that might actually hurt me a little...not that you have the required muscle power to drive it into my heart.” After a moment of silence, the vampire exhaled again. “Nothing else? That’s disappointing. Not even going to hit me with The Holy Bible? I’ve had that happen before. More often than you might imagine.”

Barry swallowed, mouth dry, trying to maintain a semblance of composure. He’d been so sure he could do this... “Look- I-I-I apologize f-for t-tracking you. Oh- I swear to G-God, I’ll n-never say a-a w-word! I b-beg you'll j-just take the e-evidence and g-go.”

The vampire stepped closer. He put his hand on the cross. The gloved fingers touched his, sending a hopeless dread through Barry’s body. What was the point of holy things if they couldn’t end even one demon?

The monster pushed the cross down. “I’m hungry, and you really believe that for a second I would trust you with my secret?”
Barry had nowhere to run. He was paralyzed. He couldn't quite meet the monster's gaze or look away. “I...w-wouldn't...”

“You would,” the demon whispered, leaning closer.

The whole room felt like it was freezing over and Barry shrank back as much as he could. “Please...please, I d-don’t want to die. I b-beg you, p-please! I'll do a-anything, anything you want!”

“You are rather sweet compared to most,” the professor breathed against his neck, hands gripping his sides. Barry struggled, but couldn’t move at all. “Your death is a pity, but inevitable. All of you mortals, so fragile, fleeting as the wind.”

“No-” Barry gasped. “I d-don’t want to die-” he repeated miserably.

“-shouldn’t have tracked a vampire-”

“I j-just wanted to do something g-good; I just wanted to b-be more-”

“-Altruism, Mr. Allen?-”

“-Please.” Tears streamed from his eyes.

“Shhh... *Fortuna caeca est*, Mr. Allen... It will be over soon.”

Pain crashed through his body, arcing from his neck. Every limb went numb, unstable, and he slumped back, leaning on the wall. A set of fingers dug into his shoulders, another into his chest. Dizzy, disoriented, he fought against the wall of strength before him but gained nothing. He shut his eyes and opened his mouth. No words left his lips.

The vampire pushed closer.

He was aware only of the pressure and fading pain in his neck. Something warm and wet was sliding down his skin, and the scent of iron filled the air.

*I don’t want to die like this...*

Eobard almost moaned when the sweet sweet blood hit his tongue. He was certain that in all his years, he had never had such a plethora of flavors surging over his tastebuds quite like this before. Oh, some things had come close, but this- it was utterly heady. The world was practically spinning, and he was wasted on the thick, warm liquid seeping down his throat. He pulled the mortal closer, sinking his teeth in further, wanting more and more. He wanted to take every last drop. Blood spilled from the sloppy movement, flowing down the mortal’s neck. He berated himself for being so careless as to waste his limited supply.

Barry Allen.

His eyes had been bright when he’d greeted Eobard, warm, a bit guarded - but not unpleasantly so. A cute smile had curled his face. The young man's enthusiasm had almost infected him to feel the same. He’d sounded unusually altruistic, too. Here he was, living in a dump, more worried about psychos and immortals than his own well-being. That stupid cross proved it. He hadn't even researched how much power it actually gave him over a vampire, but he'd still taken that chance.

He was dirty, like most in this time period, hair a filthy mess that had been poorly-trimmed long ago, probably months. Eobard’s first taste of his skin would have been revolting if he wasn’t used to all
his prey being this way these past several centuries.

But Eobard wondered what it’d be like, to see the mortal without all the filth and lack of self-care.

Eventually, the man’s eyes drifted shut, and he went completely limp. Eobard continued drinking the addicting blood.

...However, he couldn’t help but think that killing him would be too easy, too boring, an utter waste, an absolute shame.

Barry was aware of the chill first, of how cold it was. Footsteps crunched through dirt and rocks and reached his ears. He had a headache. Every sense was sluggish and uncertain. He seemed to be moving though, and something was holding him close, carrying him. His eyes fluttered, but the light was too bright. He squeezed them shut again, groaning. The thing holding him stopped. A shadow fell over his face. He cracked his eyelids open and squinted up into a cold gaze, a face of prominent features.

"You're...breathtaking," he mumbled through his hazy thoughts.

The distance between their faces decreased in an instant. Warm lips brushed his, covered his. He tongued their seam. They tasted metallic. He was dreaming- had to be.

The man jerked away.

"S'rry," Barry murmured before falling back into the deep murkiness swimming in his head.

Chapter End Notes

Latin Translations (I apologize in advance if any of this is inaccurate somehow. I don't speak Latin and I get these quotes from the internet) -
Condemnant quod non intellegunt. - They condemn what they do not understand.
Atrox melior dulcissima veritas mendaciis. - The bitter truth is better than the sweetest lies.
Fortuna caeca est. - Fate is blind.
Midnight

Barry opened his eyes, harsh light flooding his vision. He shut them. He felt a little lightheaded, and his eyelids were surprisingly heavy. He forced them open, feeling far more tired than he recalled feeling in quite some time. He struggled to focus. When he succeeded, he found himself staring at an unfamiliar ceiling. Confusion swirled through his thoughts, and he started to sit forward. He was stopped short. Upon inspection, he found himself trapped by the arms and legs. Thick ropes were tied around each limb, holding him to a chair. A surge of adrenaline rushed through his veins. He tugged at the restraints, hope fading as he realized their strength. Desperate, he cast his gaze around for any hope of escape.

He only found familiar, disquieting, icy eyes staring back at him.

"Wh-?" He started, but his throat twinged in discomfort. He cleared it and swallowed. He tried again. "W...where am I?"

"In my personal manor, about ten kilometers from the pathetic shed in which I found you."

Barry fought the growing panic. "W-why...why didn't...you...?" He trailed off, unable to finish the sentence.

The man clicked his tongue. "Barry," he said like he was tasting the word, playing with the way it sounded, "Barry, Barry-"

"Y-you can't call me that-"

"I can call you whatever I desire," Professor Thawne replied in a calm voice. "You'll keep calling me Professor, though. It has a nice ring in your voice."

Barry hesitated, bewildered. "I...don't understand what's going on?"

"I have an offer to make, one I know you can’t refuse unless you lack the intelligence I previously credited you with."

Barry decided not to say anything. He realized that there was a stiff, sticky feeling on his neck. That was dried blood...

"You see," Professor Thawne continued, "I've experienced a lot in the past two thousand years...but earlier was the first time I’ve experienced anything like you. You’re... intoxicating." His voice was like honey when he said the word.

Barry stiffened, unease growing. He gave a subconscious tug on the restraints and dropped his eyes to the floor, heart rate accelerating. "My...blood," he guessed.

Professor Thawne moved forward and paused in front of Barry, grabbing his chin. The professor's fingers were cool against his skin. He pulled Barry's face up, forcing him to meet his gaze again. "Intoxicating," he repeated. The hand shifted up, brushing Barry's hair out of his face. He felt every ounce of him jumping with each shift of the cold digits. The hand traced down his face, trailing back behind his jaw, applying light pressure against his skin.

Barry struggled with the desire to start thrashing in absolute terror. He didn't think it would do him any good. "I- Y-you don't have to-"
Sharp claws sliced into his skin. Barry gasped and jerked his head back, his heart jumping into a powerful speed.

"I apologize," the creature murmured. "So hard not to damage your kind." Barry felt blood welling on his jaw, and his eyes watered. "It won't hurt for long." Professor Thawne leaned forward and pressed his lips there, the warm wetness of a tongue following. Barry gave a small noise of indignation and alarm. He tried to pull away, but he had nowhere to go. He hadn't realized he was already leaning as far back as he could manage. The professor's lips pulled back just a little, but still touched him. They shifted against his skin when he murmured in a throaty, soft voice, "your blood tasted better earlier, after your pleasure."

Barry felt the tingling sensation of all the blood draining from his face.

"But still so delicious...tinged bitter and sweet with your primal fear."

Gooseflesh rose, and a tight feeling occurred in his gut. He trembled and swallowed hard as Professor Thawne drew back. "Shhh," the vampire soothed, lips slightly darker in shade, stark against his skin, "you're so pallid, heartbeat so thunderous, but there's no need for that. If I wanted your death, we wouldn't be having this conversation, Barry."

"T-then w-what do you w-want?" Barry stammered at his knees, shaken, trying to forget what had just happened. He was beginning to remember things he didn't want to remember, feelings he loathed. He remembered a dream - or was it? - of lips against his, and this was possibly the worst time to be reminded of such a terrible thing.

"Look at me when you speak." Professor Thawne gripped his jaw again, and their eyes were made to lock together once more.

"W-what," Barry repeated weakly, "d-do you w-want?"

"You."

Barry shook his head to show his confusion.

"Your blood."

Barry struggled to contain his fear at the sharp gaze boring into his soul. "I don't- If- Then why aren't you draining it?" He blurted.

Professor Thawne's head tilted. "I'm not going to kill you. How many times must I say it?"

"But...you want my blood..." Barry said, trying to focus on his logic instead of his dread. "O-oh...oh... You want me to...keep giving it...to be your..." he searched for a word that made the most sense without sounding too strange, "...chattel?"

"I was going to say blood bag," Professor Thawne purred, "but that's a good way of putting it. Yes, I want your blood. Living. Warm. Fresh. For as long as I can."

"And you'll...what? Keep me tied up until I die?"

"No, Barry. Having your consent would be far less troublesome, so I have an offer. In return for your blood, I'll make sure you dine every night. You'll never go to bed hungry. Just look how thin you are. And you can also pursue whatever makes you happy. I don't care what. I'll pay for it if necessary. Money is no issue. All I ask in return is to feed approximately once every month or two. To throw in a bonus, I'll even stop killing the degenerates and madmen if it pleases you so much. I'd
do anything for your comfort and pleasure if you agree.”

Barry scoffed, throwing his hands up as far as he could in the restraints. “You have me tied to a chair. Why should I believe that you’d care about my comfort?”

“I have you tied so you won’t run away until we’re done conversing... As for your future - stress, illness, and discomfort all make blood taste terrible to me.”

“Yet fear doesn’t?”

“Fear is like...spice for you humans, I suppose. It’s not for everyone, but many love it.”

Barry absorbed the information for a moment, thinking. “And if I refuse?” He breathed. "Would you...?" He swallowed again.

“If you refuse this offer - and only the heavens would know why - I'll just return to my usual hunting patterns, killing as I please, and if you even thought of breathing the word vampire again to anyone, I’d kill them all right in front of you, seeing as you care for others so much.”

Barry shuddered, though he felt the tiniest spark of hope he was going to live through tonight. “But you’d let me go...?” he asked in a small voice.

Professor Thawne's eyes narrowed. “...Yes.”

"I don't understand. You wouldn't before - at my house."

"You mean your rundown shack? I am not hungry now, as I was then... I am also certain you will not underestimate me in the future." He gestured. "Barry, even you must realize you have no life back there. Not one worth returning too. As you previously told me, everyone laughed your intelligence off, as they so often do. You were barely scraping enough together to feed yourself... However, I... Well, I can offer you anything that is within a man's power to offer you."

I need to think. Barry took deep breaths, trying to calm his nerves. It wasn’t such a bad offer, he admitted to himself. He knew that the vampire was right. If he left, he’d be right where he was before he started his investigations... But if he stayed, all he had to do was expose his neck every month or two. In return, there’d be no more cold and hungry nights. He would have so much free time, free time he could do anything with.

Better still, if he accepted, he could put an end to the monster’s centuries-long murder spree. As time went on, with the vampire assuming he was complacent, Barry would have ample opportunity to look for the enemy’s weaknesses, assuming it had any. Once he found one, he could see the demon answer for its crimes. Where things went from there, he couldn’t say, but it had to be better than the future waiting for him at that rundown shack of a house if he went back to it now, trying to pretend he’d never been following a vampire in the first place.

He knew, deep down, no one would ever truly believe what he'd discovered anyway. “I accept,” he said before he could let his better judgement decline the deal.

Professor Thawne gave a smile like he’d just won a contest or argument - a smile full of arrogance and triumph. Barry tried not to shiver at the look. The vampire's sharp claws slid out and sliced through Barry's bonds in the blink of an eye.

Barry blinked. “You’re fast.”

“I know.”
Barry rubbed his wrists as he stood, and Professor Thawne drew closer. Their eyes met, and a chill went up Barry’s spine. “I’m... pretty hungry, actually,” he started, cautious, inching away. “Do you even have human food?”

The professor grabbed his arm in a tight hold, halting his retreat. A thrill ran through Barry’s stomach. “Of course,” the vampire said, “and I know you must be terribly famished after I fed, but there is a more pressing issue first.”

Barry furrowed his brow. “What could possibly be so pressing-?”

“You must bathe,” the professor said, wrinkling his nose.

“What? Why?”

“Your scent is awful and the ancients only know how long it’s been since you’ve properly bathed. And I’m not even drawing attention to the layer of grime I had to bite through just to get to your skin.”

Barry couldn’t smell anything wrong, so he wasn’t sure what the creature meant. Honestly, his skin wasn’t *that* dirty. “You’re exaggerating. I always wipe down with a wet rag every evening.”

The creature frowned with what seemed to be disapproval. “I have soap, and you will use it.” The professor practically dragged him from the room, down a hall.

Barry stumbled after. ”I don’t need to be-” he protested.

The vampire pulled him into what appeared to be a kitchen area, which was just as vast as everything else. He showed Barry a wood stove. “Personally,” he said, still holding onto him to prevent an escape, ”I find fire unpleasant, but it is a necessary evil at time. I stoked it to life because I knew you would need it. I am aware you will not wish to bathe in cool water, so boil some pans of it first. The well is just outside the back door.”

Barry turned his gaze slowly to him. “You want *me* to do it?” He asked in incredulity.

“I don’t have servants.”

“This was your idea! And with your speed, you’d do it much faster-.”

“You will learn how to take care of yourself as long as you are under my care. You will fix your bath. The washroom is just down the hall on the east side. You should have no trouble locating it.”

Barry looked at the stove. “Are you absolutely sure this is necessary-?”

“Yes.”

“Do I-?”

“Yes.”

“But-”

“Yes, Barry. Stop being so childish. You will bathe, or I will throw you into the nearest lake where parasites and venomous snakes thrive.”

"Fine."
The professor finally let go. Barry rubbed his arm pointedly. He searched the cupboards, grabbing the first three pans he saw.

The vampire spoke up, “And you’ll burn those clothes. You won’t wear such rags in my home. They are a disgrace to the both of us.”

Barry didn’t even try to argue now. The vampire was obviously as crazy as he had anticipated. He was beginning to regret agreeing to the offer, though that outcome wasn’t exactly unexpected. Sighing, he carried the pan outside where the bright moonlight illuminated the lawn and located the well. He pulled its handle, filling his pan. Painstakingly, one pan at a time, he filled the bath then set to boiling the water. All the while, he scowled in the professor’s direction as often as possible. The vampire didn’t help, just stood in the exact same spot and watched him whenever Barry was in the kitchen. It was agitating and unsettling.

While Barry waited for the water to boil, the professor gave him a brief tour. The manor was huge and decorated in a lavish way. There were multiple bedrooms, but one had already been selected as his, one that was surprisingly welcoming in appearance. He was also introduced to the master bedroom that was the vampire’s. It was decorated in rich, red hues. No surprise there. Otherwise, there was the dining room, a lounge, a foyer, and plenty of extra space. Outside, there was a courtyard, a vineyard, a garden, and also an apple orchard. The rest of the property was surrounded in dense foliage and trees. Barry was sure he wouldn’t have found this place if he’d gone searching for it on his own. There was no dense, mystical fog like in the illustrations, but the manor was hidden well enough. Also, it was a lot less monstrous in appearance than it had appeared in that same illustration.

Barry ignored the eyes locked on him as they returned to the kitchen to the boiling water. He took it to the washroom and dumped it. He returned to the kitchen. “Okay,” Barry uttered, returning the pans a little more forcefully than necessary to the cupboard. “It’s done.”

“You still need to wash.”

“Getting there.” Barry turned and a started for the washroom.

“Barry,” Professor Thawne spoke, his tone dragging Barry to a halt.

Barry turned and the creature was right there. He stepped back without meaning too, heart fluttering as adrenaline surged through his veins. “What?” He said a bit more harshly than he meant to.

“You will remove those rags.”

“Um...I know. Just as soon as I’ve reached the washroom.”

Professor Thawne was unrelenting. “You will do it now.”

“I don’t see wh-?”

“Now,” the immortal hissed, eyes darkening, fangs popping out from under his lips.

Barry gulped and pulled off his stained overcoat, dropping it onto the ground. He undid his worn waistcoat before tossing it aside as well. Embarrassingly, his shirt had multiple holes in it. He hadn’t really thought of it until now, standing next to Professor Thawne’s older but much higher quality outfit. He undid his loose, bloodstained necktie and pulled them both off.

“You are so thin,” the professor muttered again, frowning. “The thinner you are, the less blood will be in your veins for me to drink. That will change.”
Barry faced the immense discomfort that came with baring legs, and eventually, his groin.
“Satisfied?” he all but snarled.

Professor Thawne’s eyes raked over him, raising more gooseflesh. Barry couldn't help but feel he was being appraised like a hog at an auction.  “Mostly. Less grime and more weight would be preferable.”

Barry felt a swirl of confusing sensations churn in his gut. “I’m going to bathe, then,” he said in a tight voice.

“Do it. Don't forget your hair, either. Comb it after you wash.”

Barry turned around and made for the washroom, trying to shrug away the unsettled feeling he was experiencing. He closed the door to the washroom behind him and lowered himself into the warm water. He soaped up and scrubbed his skin practically raw. He refused to be ordered to do this again if it didn’t please the vampire’s standard of cleanliness. He then cleaned his hair. Once finished, he climbed out, pulled on a bathrobe and combed his hair, one clump at a time. He snipped what couldn’t be combed. Finished, he left the washroom, wondering what the vampire’s plan for clothing was.

“You look much better, Barry,” he was greeted with as soon as he found the professor. The immortal threw a pile of clothes into his arm. “I've disposed of your old outfit. These should suffice in their place, though they may be a little large. You’ll need to be fitted for something more appropriate later. I'm thinking something...red.”

Barry stared at the rich maroon overcoat in his arms with some awe. The trousers were tan, the waistcoat black, the shirt and cravat white. The materials were obviously expensive from their quality. Even though they looked a decade old, the entire outfit was likely worth more than what he could ever have dreamt of affording before tonight. He raised his eyes back to the vampire.

The professor's brows raised.

Barry decided asking would just be wasting time. He took off the bathrobe and started redressing right there in the new clothing. He didn't look at the professor the entire time, just focused on the clothing.

When he finally finished and affixed his attention back to the vampire, he found the cold eyes piercing and attentive. “Much better,” Professor Thawne said in approval. “However, as predicted, it is a little large. Fortunately, the size difference mostly makes up for the size of your limbs.” He grabbed Barry’s arm again and guided him to his bedroom. Barry was confused until he found himself in front of a mirror.

He gaped. He barely recognized himself in the reflection. It’d been awhile since he’d seen his reflection so directly and clearly. He looked...good save for the gauntness of his face, the looseness of the outfit with it's just-barely-too-short sleeves and trousers. There were also the disturbing marks - the scratch on his face and the two points where fangs had sunk into his neck. They reminded him he was now a vampire's walking dinner. He tried to ignore them. He ran his hand over the maroon material. “They’re nice,” he said after a few moments, “...but...I'm not entirely convinced they’re...me.”

“They will be,” the professor said, leaning in close. Barry could feel the press of his body, could see the incredibly small proximity between them through the mirror. The vampire buried his face into the crook of his neck, inhaling. “I have some oils,” he breathed, “to make you smell even better.”
Barry scoffed, trying not to be unnerved by the vampire. He knew this was a normal thing for the creature. “That’s ridiculous. I’m not a woman.”

“In my time, everyone used them,” the professor said. Barry felt alarm shoot through him when Professor Thawne's fangs slid out again and grazed his neck.

“Well, times have changed,” Barry retorted, squirming away, rumpling his new outfit in the process. Once he'd put a comfortable distance between them, he smoothed it out. “If you’re done playing around, could I please have dinner? You’ve already had yours, after all.”

Professor Thawne eyed him for a moment. “Of course, Barry.”
Bottom of the page:

Heads-up!
Please be sure to read the rating and the new tags! This chapter is explicit, definitely. It also turned out a bit darker than I originally meant it to. But I think it really works here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“This...is incredible,” Barry murmured. He looked at Professor Thawne.

The vampire smirked back at him.

Barry tried to tame his excitement and strode into the magnificent library. He’d barely seen two books in one place - the ones he owned - but here... They occupied every free inch of the massive room, stacked on tables and crammed in book cases that turned the vast space into a maze. However, they appeared well-organized, and many of them were in languages he didn't recognize.

“I...could get lost in here,” Barry said, eyes roaming the room with wonder.

“Perhaps,” the professor replied. “Wait until you're introduced to the chemistry laboratory.”

He turned to the professor, rapt. “The... A chemistry laboratory?"

“Interested in chemistry, Barry?”

“Yes,” he admitted, tugging at his new sleeve. “I...have an interest in science, especially chemistry...and also astronomy.”

The vampire looked upon him with a new expression, one that showed fresh interest. “Ah, so you are after my heart, Barry Allen - whatever’s left of it. I too have a fondness for science.”

Barry glanced around the library wistfully. "I would have loved to make either field my profession...but I couldn't pay for the education.”

"If you wish to study those professions, then do so. I have several tomes on those very subjects you’ll find to your satisfaction. And should you grow bored of study, I also have some decent fiction works here and there to pass the time.” Professor Thawne gestured, “come on, you may explore this later. I will show you the lab. In fact, it’s yours, if you wish.”

Barry felt his brows shoot for his hairline. "Mine?" he could barely own a small house, forget anything as fancy as a chemistry lab

"In truth, I haven't used it properly in years.”

"But...why?"

"No projects have taken my fancy in a while. You must keep in mind, Barry, that as a two thousand-year-old vampire, I tend to take centuries off at a time from my hobbies instead of weeks or months."
Barry shook his head as they left the library. He still had trouble believing this was the vampire he'd been tracking. Professor Thawne didn't seem nearly as frightening quite suddenly, especially when compared to the night before.

The night before...

He recalled the dinner he'd received. It'd been exquisite in every sense of the word. He'd never remembered experiencing such rich flavors, the feeling of being so completely and thoroughly sated. He could still recall the aroma of roast mutton, sweet corn, sliced apples and seasoned pea pods. It'd been so long since he'd eaten anything but bland potatoes, slightly-stale bread, or poor quality vegetables, and it'd been truly wonderful. Turning in last night had been...odd. The bed was ridiculously soft. He'd never known beds could be so...comfortable, especially with his stomach so filled. Not that sleep had come easy, not when the knowledge that there was a vampire in the same manor that wanted his blood pervaded his thoughts.

How could this possibly be his existence now? There had to be a catch besides giving his blood, and he just hadn't realized it yet. The thought made him uneasy.

They traipsed to a staircase leading down. Barry gave Professor Thawne a questioning look. They were on the ground floor.

"Partially underground," the vampire explained. "I built it myself. I find most things store better in cool places, and I can work in the daytime without overextending myself."

Barry took the steps down, entering what must've been the lab. There were containers of every kind, more books, desks laden with bottles and vials, countless chemicals meticulously labeled and organized in their containers. Paper, ink, and parchments were stacked on a nearby desk, and a fireplace and chimney sat empty in one of the walls. Oddly enough, there was a door in the back wall. The empty spaces boasted scientific illustrations, formulas and astronomical charts. They appeared to be painstakingly made with perfect circles and ellipses drawn to show planetary orbits.

"Whoa," Barry whispered, breath stolen away.

"I have a telescope on the roof, too, and you’re also welcome to it."

Barry nodded, almost trembling at this point with anticipation of everything he could do or try. He moved through the desks, investigating the materials and notes that the professor had already taken and stored. He opened the other door in the room when he reached it. Just inside were plants on the walls where moonlight seeped in through small windows. Down the hallway he traveled, to another doorway. Inside was a huge, cellar-like space where wine and vegetables were stored.

Shock struck him. Against the far wall, was an actual cell. The bars glinted in the light that filtered in, and even from this distance, Barry could see shackles on the back wall and also the floor.

"For the turning."

Barry spun around, heart leaping. In the dark space, the monster’s eyes seemed to glow. He caught himself. "The what?" he asked.

"The turning. Making a human into a vampire. They need to be restrained so they don't go on a mindless rampage and destroy a town or get themselves killed by drawing attention from hunters. The first few days of being a vampire...is a difficult and harsh time. Not only does the emergent vampire need restrained, but a constant blood supply to survive."

A chill ran through Barry's body. "I don't care how you monsters are made. Let's just go."
"Suit yourself."

The vampire followed him back to the lab.

“I suppose that concludes the tour, then,” Professor Thawne said in an amicable tone. “Enjoy yourself, make yourself at home. Do whatever you wish. I’ve lived for two thousand years and nothing is strange to me anymore, even if you desire to try acrobatics off the chandeliers - though not advisable for a mortal."

"What?"

The vampire ignored his surprised question. "Whatever you do, don't get yourself killed. That'd be a pity. I’m going to go rest for awhile. I haven't done so in a couple weeks. And...well, if you decide wise decisions are not for you and that you’d rather leave, Barry...just keep in mind what I said last night. I’ll kill anyone you breath a word of this to. That is all.” He exited the lab with swift, silent strides.

Barry felt cold, even with his overcoat on. The vampire unsettled him in every way, and those eyes... He shook away such thoughts and decided to explore the library first. As long as the books within weren’t written by bloodthirsty, insane beasts and instead were by reputable authors...he could become quite educated.

Barry investigated the books for several hours, flipping through them to provide himself a preview of each section and what he should expect. A lot of them were older, in languages he didn’t know, but he found that Professor Thawne seemed to have translated most of the older tomes to English. The translations sat right by the originals. The writing in them was neat, meticulous, and easy to understand. There was a certain respect he felt for the incredible patience the professor had to rewrite hundreds upon hundreds of books from front to back in another language and with this much accuracy and precision.

He put away a tome and strode on down the aisle between book cases.

At this point, one case drew his attention. It sat in the farthest corner, its wood a rich, dark, decorated mahogany with designs of flowers and birds carved into its body. Two glass doors covered the front, showing more books inside.

Barry hesitated at the obvious importance the bookcase showed. But professor Thawne hadn't said any of the books were off limits, so...

He went to the case and carefully pulled it open. His eyes roamed over the titles of the translated counterparts to the foreign books. Most of the titles were ambiguous enough, but he was surprised that those that weren't were odd, indeed. Some were outright absurd, but he assumed they must be from other, uneducated cultures. That didn't mean they could be completely disregarded, he knew, just read with a careful eye. Why Professor Thawne kept these in this special case, he didn't know. He’d have to ask. Maybe the professor just had an affinity for the ludicrous, which seemed to be the truth of him so far.

Barry decided he would check out at least one before leaving this case. He scrutinized the titles to determine which might prove most interesting to waste a few more moments on.

One grabbed his eye.

Amor.
He was incredulous. This didn't sound like the kind of book a vampire might own. He seized it and flipped it open, eyes landing on blocks of text. He began reading the text. *There are many ways for the body to connect with another physically...* It struck him, just what he was reading. *It is easy to underestimate the ecstasy the lips alone can provide...* The text described an act, between two men, that churned his stomach. His pulse increased, and he felt a tingling through his skin as his face began to burn. He flipped the page, sheer bewilderment keeping his eyes there, where a detailed illustration of lips against-

He slammed the book shut and stuffed it in place, hands shaking a little. He shut the doors before closing his eyes. He attempted to calm himself. After all, he shouldn’t expect anything different from an insane, immortal *monster. Freak, beast, demon-*

“I wondered when you’d find that shelf.”

Barry jerked around. “Don’t sneak up on me!” he hissed, hating the pounding of his heart in his chest. He shook his head, muttering, "I thought you were resting..."

"One need only rest for so long."

"I thought it'd be longer."

"My kind do not need as much rest as yours."

Barry inhaled shudderingly, his eyes refusing to meet the vampire's fully. "What do you want then?"

The professor’s head tilted. “I figured it was high time we traveled to the city and got you fitted for some clothes of your own. Those don't fit you correctly.”

Barry sighed. “I can’t just do that by myself?"

“No. I will accompany you. You will need introduced to my favorite tailor of this generation..."

Barry forced himself to nod, trying to fix his composure. “If we must.”

They took the path leading through the dense woods, and though it curved and twisted and contained hills, there was a steady descending pattern to its progress. The day was chilly and cloudy, but Barry felt warm enough in his current clothing.

“Why live in this seclusion?” Barry asked Professor Thawne as they crossed a small crook.

Professor Thawne scoffed. “I am a vampire, Barry."

“I know...but vampires are the masters of disguise. For myself, I thought I would recognize one on sight, and yet you still caught me off guard.”

The vampire glanced sidelong at him. “You aren’t a hunter, and they are much more adept at spotting us. Hunters tend to be the reason we avoid civilization whenever possible. That and your societies incredibly irritating laws.”

Barry wanted to remark on how the laws were meant to keep people safe, but he knew it would just fall on deaf ears. Instead, he said, “Official hunters...really exist?"

“Yes. They are as secretive and paranoid as we are, and even harder to find. Compared to them, you
were like a child blundering lost through a black forest.”

“Great,” Barry said with a frown. “Thank you for your kind assessment.”

“Don’t take offense. They have training, numbers, experience, and knowledge. Besides, Barry, you’re naivety doesn’t subtract from who you are. It is quite charming.”

Barry felt extremely uncomfortable, and decided not to reply.

A few more bends in the trail past them by in silence.

The vampire broke it, “you seem...agitated.”

“It’s nothing important.” Barry frowned at his shoes as if they had personally wronged him.

“Likely. And yet...I find myself curious.”

“I am decidedly less rested than I would prefer.”

"Is your bed uncomfortable?"

"No. I'm unaccustomed to it, but I'll adjust."

"I feel there is more to this agitation, Barry, than a lack of sleep."

More silence and distance passed.

"Your books,” Barry blurted, looking up from the ground he'd been focused on. He had determined to stay silent on this subject, but now he knew he couldn't. Holding it in only increased his irritation.

The vampire's eyes turned to look directly at him. They narrowed for a moment. Professor Thawne sighed with more energy than Barry assumed was necessary. The immortal chuckled before returning his attention to the trail. “I wondered if this would be brought up.”

“A fair amount of your books are absolutely absurd. Yes, there are plenty of informative ones and plenty of fictional tales that seem interesting. However, I cannot wrap my mind around that one particular bookcase with the doors. From top to bottom, it is filled with countless absurdities, wild ravings and musings by madmen, surely. These aren't fictional or poetry tomes. They are presented like they are facts. For example, *Amor*. I can’t imagine any being could live for *two thousand years* and only learn nonsense!”

The vampire didn't respond in quite the anticipated way. “Is it nonsense?”

“Of course it is. Anyone would tell you so.”

“Not everyone, Barry. I know plenty of people who understand those books.”

“And by *people* I suppose you mean *vampires*,” Barry muttered.

A rain droplet hit the ground, followed by another and another.

“I am not about to argue now about your misconception of what a vampire is, Barry, but no,” the creature replied, “I know *mortals* who reject your everyday *facts*. An amount that would surprise your narrow mind.”

“They’re insane, especially if they’re associating with vampires.”
“Oh? What does that make you?”

Barry stopped midstride, turning a glare on him. “Someone who had to make an impossible choice!” he snapped.

"Impossible?"

"People were dying! And what can I do against you? Nothing! All I could do to help... was agree to this... humiliating arrangement! All because everyone refused to listen to me! Where are those hunters at, exactly? They weren't doing their job! I tracked you for months, but my evidence indicates you've been in this area for centuries!"

"They are mostly dead," Professor Thawne replied. "I have been tracking them, myself, slowly eradicating the vermin that they are. I am certain that they are mostly gone from this area. Those that remain, fear me too much to attempt the level of recklessness you exhibited."

"Right. So now people who want to get rid of the actual parasites are vermin!"

"Again with your misconceptions, Barry."

"You kill people! Defenseless, unarmed, often innocent people!"

"And the hunters are also killers. Not all of my kind choose to murder, but the hunters do not discriminate."

"Just forget it." Barry began walking again, stomping more than anything. He heard the vampire following. The rain increased a little, thrumming in the undergrowth with soft drops. "Killing aside, you want me to believe that books that describe in such detail... such vile acts like they're loving and good... is a factual book that... is normal! What will you tell me next? That torture is fine? Slavery?"

"You're society tortures and enslaves far more often than mine does."

There was nothing more for several seconds but light rain droplets hitting leaves.

“Something tells me, Barry Allen, that this... rage at my books has nothing to do with other people, but rather, yourself. Temet nosce. Only those who find themselves have harmony.”

Barry’s flesh erupted in goosebumps. He didn't reply. There was no reason to. The vampire was insane.

They reached the city about an hour later without any more words. Barry was subjected to being measured after an introduction to the tailor to have his own clothing made. The tailor seemed to have the utmost respect for Professor Eobard Thawne, speaking highly of him and how proud Barry must be to know someone of such standing. If only this man knew... But Barry held his tongue and gave vague agreements to prevent suspicion on the tailor's part.

“I will have it done in a few days, Mr. Allen,” the tailor finally said.

"Thank you, Mr. Willis."

Barry said farewell and retreated as fast as was reasonably possible before he could hear any more complete fiction on Professor Thawne. He stepped outside to find the vampire leaning under an overhang on a shop across the street. Barry crossed the street, dodging the horse carts and halting beside the professor.
“Good,” Professor Thawne said, “you didn’t attempt to out my secret. It would have been a pity to kill him if he somehow believed you.”

“You thought I would risk it?”

“I was certain you wouldn't, but I did have my doubts. You're a little...altruistic, a little bit of a risk-taker. If you had any doubts of my power, especially during the day, you may have attempted something that would have been unpleasant for those you involved.”

“I guess I’m not as much of an idiot as you took me for.”

“I never took you for an idiot, Barry - just naïve.”

Barry assessed the vampire again, trying to determine here in the open, in the watery light of the overcast sky, just how obvious his inhuman side was. As far as Barry could tell, he looked very human, though with maybe just a touch too pale of skin. Such a coloration could be attributed to many things that weren’t supernatural, though. When Barry had first seen him, he hadn't even noticed in the dim lighting of his house.

Still, he reminded himself, under the human guise was a creature with claws and fangs and a sinful, black soul.

“Shall we return to the manor, then?” Barry asked.

“Yes.”

Barry was about to dress down for bed when he heard a knock at the door. He paused and reluctantly turned. “What?” He asked the door.

Professor Thawne entered without waiting for an invitation, his eyes somehow already on Barry. “I received word a few hours ago that we are to have guests arriving tomorrow evening.”

“Guests? More blood bags?”

“No. They’re kindred. Vampires.”

Barry stopped tugging at his suit. His fingers lost some strength, and he looked back at the vampire. “W...why?”

“They are...acquaintances of mine, and they are making a journey to London. They will stay a day here.”

Barry shook his head, nerves knotting. “You think it’s a good idea to let other vampires near me?”

“They won’t touch you. I will make sure of it.”

“How? You think you're so powerful you can prevent a group of your own kind from taking what they want?”

The vampire blinked. “Stop pretending we're a bunch of uncivilized beasts, Barry. At this point, you're continued forced ignorance is beginning to undermine your potential...and your charm.”

Barry forced himself to remember who he was talking to. There was really nothing to gain from trying to antagonize this mad creature. “You're really going to tell me that I am in no danger?” He asked with a fidget.
"I won't lie. There is a...possibility. Not every vampire respects mortality. But they respect me. And, to ensure they do not hesitate in respecting my boundaries, I will take some of your blood. Not only will I be at full strength, but also, they will see my mark on you. They will know you are mine - that I will not let you come to any harm. They will respect that you are my...chattel."

Barry turned to him fully, not sure he liked the use of the words mine and my. He chose to ignore it, though. "I...I thought you said this was a one to two month deal?"

“This is an exception. I don’t need much blood, just enough to give my strength a boost.”

“Why don’t you try saying please for once?” Barry bit out with annoyance. “You’re always commanding me. I never get a say.”

“If you need such a semblance of control, I will play along. Will you allow me to take some of your blood for your own protection tomorrow, Mr. Allen?”

Barry sighed. “Being courteous to a mortal isn’t so difficult, is it?”

“Answer my question.”

“...Yes. Just, please, make this quick. I want to sleep.”

The vampire approached him. “Lie down flat on your back to keep the blood evenly distributed throughout your body. Also, it’ll help relax you so it won’t hurt as bad.”

“That still sounds like a command,” Barry muttered, but he took a seat at the end of the bed, regardless. He scooted back and lay down as instructed, trying to keep his mind blank.

Professor Thawne climbed onto the bed next to him. Barry didn’t care for the way the bed dipped under the added weight. “I’m going to suck the skin a bit to get the blood near the surface. I don’t need to hit your vein for this. I imagine it won’t even sting this way.”

Barry nodded, swallowing. His stomach was tight with his anxiety, and he wasn't sure why he was afraid of something so simple.

Professor Thawne's fingers pulled at his cravat, tugging it off. There was an authority and confidence in the motion that weakened Barry's strength. The vampire leaned in, pressing his lips to Barry’s neck. Barry wanted to shut his eyes, but he didn’t. If he did so, then he had to acknowledge that there was a reason he felt it necessary. There shouldn't be a reason to react at all to what was happening.

He felt the way the vampire took a fold of skin into his mouth, but there was no pain from sharp fangs, just the light pressure of sucking lips, the wet and warmth of the lips leaving saliva on his flesh. A tingle ran up his spine, and his body trembled ever so slightly. Professor Thawne sucked harder like Barry's blood was not cooperating.

But it didn't hurt.

In fact, it felt good. Barry’s heart beat a little faster, and his breathing became interrupted.

The fangs went into his flesh.

He suppressed a gasp, barely keeping it in. But it was not pain stealing the air from his lungs.

Why-? This isn't right. I shouldn't be-
Professor Thawne pulled back, meeting his gaze with intense eyes. They were hard to look into. “I’m going to take a bit more before I leave,” he murmured.

Barry barely managed a nod.

He felt the lips suck on another spot on his neck, on the other side, where the first bite from the night Professor Thawne showed up at his house was still healing. The vampire leaned further over him to reach it, and Barry had to fight the sensations building from the body over his. Lips sucked his skin once more, and this time, his eyes fell shut. His hands turned into fists in the sheets, scrunching them.

Why did it feel so good? The sharp canines slipped under his skin again. Barry moaned, and he felt his groin go warm. His hands flew up, reaching to encourage the vampire closer before he froze and stiffened in realization. Professor Thawne also quit moving. Barry's eyes flew open.

He dropped his arms, appalled.

The vampire lifted his head and met his gaze again, a dark smile twisting his lips. Barry's heart pounded with something like horror.

A couple seconds ticked by.

Barry's eyes dropped, showing his weakness for only a single moment.

It was enough.

“You ever had a person this close to you before, Barry?” Professor Thawne whispered, pressing even closer to him. It was unnecessary. Barry almost protested but didn't trust himself to speak. “Laid out on a bed, just you and them?”

Barry was completely paralyzed. “Th-that’s no concern of yours. W-why would you ask that?”

Professor Thawne’s eyes became half-lidded, and he murmured, “what was her name? Or...his?”

Barry felt his eyes go wide against his will.

The mouth wrapped around his length, and Barry moaned with a neediness he didn't know he could muster as strong fingers dug into his hips.

His pants were uncomfortably tight. This couldn’t be happening. He wanted to push the vampire from him, but at the same time... Barry forced himself from those thoughts. He felt his face go red. Embarrassment flooded him as well as panic, and it took every ounce of willpower to speak at all. "N-no o-one," he stammered.

I...this is just a reaction to the bite. Has to be. I’m delirious - hallucinating.

The vampire seemed to be scrutinizing him. Their faces were too close. "Vita non est vivere sed valere vita est." He whispered in a deep, husky voice that nearly destroyed Barry. He drew away from Barry again, taking the warmth that had been generated between their bodies away. He turned and slipped from the bed without a backward glance. “Goodnight and sweet
Barry didn't move or say anything. He couldn't. He watched the vampire leave the room, listened to the door shutting gently and the footsteps receding down the hallway.

He closed his eyes, the memory of the vampire so stark in his thoughts, he may as well have been there in the room still, his presence like cold ice on Barry's overheated flesh. His hand reached up and pressed against the fresh bites. Soreness answered his curious fingers, and he pushed in. In spite of the ache, he pressed harder, wanting the pain, knowing he deserved it even as he enjoyed it.

Professor Thawne's cool fingers were on his skin, his wrists, tying them to the top of the bedstead. "I'm going to punish you, Barry, for those looks you've been giving me, for your attitude-" fingers on his neck, claws just barely pressing in, "-make you scream, cry, and beg for my mercy. Just like before. Only this time, I will not grant it. You will suffer until I am finished." They slid down, splayed on his chest, before coming back in to undo the buttons of Barry's clothing.

Barry's hands went lower and began unbuttoning the waistcoat, his shirt, baring his chest. The claws raked over his skin, sending curling sensations of agony through his body that arched his spine... It felt delicious.

Barry's own blunt nails scraped his bare chest, and hegasped at the ferocity he hadn't realized he was using. But he pushed for more, because he wanted more pain, creating angry red lines over his ribcage. He needed to feel this.

The cold eyes met his, and his body burned. The vampire undid the buttons of his trousers. In a heartbeat, his claws slid deep into Barry's bared hips, creating trickles of blood. Barry flinched and groaned.

Barry pushed down his pants and cool air rushed over his exposed arousal. He clawed his thighs, lips parting as a noise escaped him. Professor Thawne met his gaze and smirked that look of arrogance and knowing and triumph that Barry wanted to despise but couldn't. The vampire's lips slid around the tip of his erection, and he went down.

Barry gasped and took his stiff length in hand, knowing he shouldn't, but madly craving the feeling it would give him. He jerked his arm.

The vampire's head bobbed, and there was just the faintest hint of fangs against his raw flesh, electrifying pain shooting throughout his body. He was grateful for the agony.

He moved harder, squeezing more than necessary, whimpering. His pleasure and pain hit a breaking point. His body tensed and he moaned. The vampire devoured his pleasure without hesitation.

But he wouldn't- couldn't let himself come from this. He pulled his hands from his length, wanting to end it there, but he wasn't quite through suffering for his insane lust.

In moments, the rope holding his arms up was sliced apart. Barry was yanked forward onto his hands and knees in front of the vampire. "You will return what I just gave to you, Barry," the vampire purred, brushing strong, clawed fingers into his hair. He gripped it hard, yanking for more agony.
Barry pulled at his own hair, his other hand squeezing onto his throat for more pain, to make himself choke a little.

"Suck."

*Barry wrapped his lips around the tight, large cock. The vampire thrusted, pulling his head down. Barry gagged and choked and agony flooded his throat. The vampire went hard and fast, and Barry only had time to whimper as tears poured down his face. Harder and harder, faster and faster, a growling noise leaving his mouth with each push, the vampire ravaged his lips, mouth and throat, snarling things in a language Barry didn't recognize but turned his insides into jelly.*

Barry's hands returned to his pulsing erection without thinking.

*The vampire pulled Barry as far down as he could, groaning. His hips shoved up, and he shuddered. A spitting, hissing, groan left Professor Thawne, and Barry felt the liquid shoot down his sore throat.*

*Why did he not absolutely loathe the way it felt?*

The intense climax struck him almost unexpectedly. Barry ejaculated at his furious strokes he hadn't consciously been making, crying out and spilling white strips of liquid across his stomach and chest. He lay there, gasping, the tension unwinding. It took several moments to think straight.

*How...?*

He hadn't meant for that to get so out of control. He cursed himself for being so weak, for letting a vampire of all the possibilities make his body react in this way. He closed his eyes, hating himself. First it was men, and now it was demons. Such feelings were supposed to be pure and good, existing only between a married man and his wife and only as a loving sensation, not as this dark twisted one he knew.

His stomach knotted and he felt like vomiting.

*What part of his soul was so completely wrong and broken to so deeply enjoy the thoughts he'd just been having?*

Chapter End Notes

Translations-
*Temet nosce - know thyself*
*Vita non est vivere sed valere vita est - life is more than merely staying alive*
The sun shone in the brilliant-blue sky, and the air was cool and pleasant. Birds tweeted in the trees as Barry explored the sprawling property, familiarizing himself with its pathways and hills. He wanted to learn it well in case the knowledge ever came in handy in seeing the vampire brought to justice. He was beginning to think such a feat was impossible, but he had to remind himself this would take time. Dealing with a two thousand-year-old demon meant he'd need patience - years of it, maybe.

He wandered back to the old apple orchard. The red fruit stood out starkly against the dark leaves, pleasant to gaze at, and so very sweet to the taste as Barry remembered from his dinner. He picked several before returning to the manor. He deposited his collection into the fruit basket before choosing one for himself and digging into it.

Professor Thawne stepped into the room, his eyes locking onto Barry.

"Why do you have food like this?" Barry asked the vampire. "Don’t you consume blood?"

“I cannot survive without blood, it is true,” Professor Thawne replied, “but food has no adverse effects, and since all vampires started as mortals...we sometimes consume it for pleasure. Where do you think I had the supplies to feed you? It tastes good. Apples happen to be favorite- not so dissimilar to biting into prey.”

“Not surprising.” Barry took a bite of the fruit. “They are good, though.”

Professor Thawne nodded, his eyes lingering on Barry in their usual way. “That clothing really looks better on you,” he said in a soft tone, like he was admiring a painting.

Barry’s stomach felt weird. He rubbed his neck, turning away. “So...um,” He finally asked the question he hadn’t exactly been looking forward to, "when do I have to expose my throat for you for real?” He idly turned an apple in the basket, staring at it.

“Whenever you are ready, though preferably within the month... Well, if I have to...I can survive months without feeding. Longer, if I decide to hunt wild animals instead, but... fur...and the taste. It’s like eating soil and moss. Some vampires resort to it because they aren't killers and it's more dangerous to hunt humans if you don't kill them... Many of those vampires drain the blood of the animal with a knife, then season it and cook it like mortal food... But as for myself, I don’t think I’d ever give up human blood.”

Barry turned back to Professor Thawne, his thoughts churning. "Have you ever tried pig's blood? It's very similar to human's, as far as study suggests-"

The vampire stepped closer, eyes narrowing. "Would you willingly go back to the poor quality vegetables and hard bread you were making do with before I found you, Barry?"

Barry opened his mouth. "I- no, but that-"

A loud rapping struck the door, and Barry jumped.

Professor Thawne smiled somewhat. It was always strange to see. His smiles really were unpleasant when they bared his sharp canines. "It would seem that company has arrived a bit earlier than expected." He pointed at the collar of Barry's shirt. "Loosen that a bit. They should see my marks, that you are mine."
Barry nodded, and the professor turned and left the room. He rubbed the back of his head and tugged uncomfortably at his collar to open it before following the professor to the door.

Professor Thawne opened it. Two men stood just beyond along with a woman. Barry stared at them, nearly dropping the fruit in his hand. One of the men was of medium height with dark hair. The other was taller, thicker, with pale blonde hair - paler than the Professor's even. Behind them, a woman with shoulder-length, braided, blond hair and piercing eyes stood, cross-legged and looking bored as she leaned on the railing. What really shocked Barry was the fact she was wearing *men's clothes*.

Vampires were strange.

Barry sat what was left of his apple aside.

"My old friends," Professor Thawne was greeting the two men, shaking their hands in turn. "Malcolm. Damien."

"Eobard," Malcolm said.

"We are not friends," Damien snorted. "That would imply that I trust you, which I do not."

"Why so sour, Damien?" Professor Thawne asked. "There's no need for that kind of attitude."

The woman pushed through the two. "Alright, that's enough ceremony, boys, don'tcha think?"

"Busy?" Malcolm asked, glancing in.

With a jolt, Barry realized their eyes were all focusing on him. He swallowed, trying to push away the nervousness.

"Human?" Damien asked. "Planning on turning him?"

"No... He is a blood servant."

"That's not like you," the woman said.

Barry spoke up, "I'm standing right here."

"Hi," Malcolm strode up and shook his hand. It took a bit of willpower not to flinch.

"You're really going to play nice with dinner?" Damien asked with a roll of his eyes.

Malcolm frowned at him before turning back to Barry. "Excuse the terrible manners. None of us were expecting to see a mortal here. I am Doctor Malcolm Merlyn, but I prefer to be called Malcolm. That is Mr. Damien Darhk. She is-"

"Sara's good, sweetie," the woman said.

"And...one of a kind," Malcolm added. "Even for a vampire."

Barry nodded hesitantly. "I'm...Barry Allen."

Malcolm's eyes glinted. He turned to Professor Thawne, who had pursed his lips.

"You turned this hunter into...a pet?"

It was Professor Thawne's turn to be stared at by their visitors. He nodded. "When you oversimplify
it like that...yes. He’s not a hunter, though, just a conspiracy nut who’s too smart for his own good.”

Barry’s head jerked with indignation. “Hey, you can’t call me a conspiracy nut!”

“He’s a cute pet,” Sara said, smiling to reveal two fangs.

Damien commented, “he must taste pretty good for you to keep him as a pet. Care to share?”

“Definitely not,” Professor Thawne said, tone clipped. “I don’t share.”

“Unfortunate. Here I was thinking we might could actually start working on that friendship you keep mentioning.”

“I don’t share my pets either,” Sara said. "Why would any vampire want to?"

“I admit,” Malcolm said, "I’m curious enough to want a taste."

“I agree with Sara,” Professor Thawne said. "Find your own dinner, you lazy useless kin."

“Keeping a pet is just too much work,” Damien uttered. “I’ve tried it. They die so easily. Step on a nail? Good as gone. Get bit by a snake? Bye-bye. Fall in the river? Never going to see that one again. Hell, if they accidently eat the wrong thing. And disease is just drawn to them. And they age so fast.”

"That was you once, Damien."

"I don't remember ever being a human, Eobard. Maybe I wasn't."

"You were." Professor Thawne stepped closer to Barry, grabbed his arm, and yanked him close. Barry blinked, surprised, trying not to show it. “You will stay by my side tonight, Barry,” he said. "You will not leave my sight without permission."

“Okay...” Barry said, not feeling confident enough to argue when there were three other vampires nearby that could rip him to shreds in a heartbeat if they wanted to.

After that, the vampires decided to go to the parlor. Professor Thawne ushered them in, still holding Barry’s arm and practically dragging him along. He had Barry sit beside him on the couch while the other two male vampires found their seats.

“Got any bourbon, Eo?” Sara asked, shaking the decanter on the table. “Or is this whiskey?”

“Don’t call me that. And yes- it's bourbon.”

“Perfect.” She poured herself a glass.

Barry mulled it over. She was a vampire sure, but wasn’t she...a woman? Or was she not? She dressed like a man, but... They were creatures, all vampires. They just assumed the looks of mortals to deceive others. She may have had a woman’s body, but she was still a beast, he reminded himself.

He studied his wrist cuff, still fighting with the nervousness trying to grow inside.

“What are you doing here?” Professor Thawne asked the visitors. "I received your letter, but I was not clear on the specifics of the visit."

Sara turned to him. “We came by on our way to the London gathering. We were going to invite you.”
“I’d rather not.”

“Why not?”

“I am...distracted.”

“Oh.” Damien said with smirk in Barry’s direction. "I see. Looks like you’re very distracted”

Professor Thawne smiled with his teeth back at him.

“You’re quiet,” remarked Sara.

Barry realized she was speaking in his direction. “I p-prefer observant.” He cleared his throat.

“Really?” She asked. “Well, I suppose you must be to have tracked Eo. He’s really quite careful.”

She glanced at Professor Thawne, finally taking a seat on an unoccupied chair. “Finally realized keeping a pet is easier than hunting? Better yet, three or four?”

“Just the one. Decided to switch it up. I don’t wish to give up hunting completely.”

“More likely, there is something special about this one,” Malcolm pointed out. “You know we’re all curious what the reason is.”

“How,” Damien asked, "can you be so imbecilic at your age, Malcolm? Just look at him. It’s because he’s pretty. All of us know Eobard can’t resist a pretty face. I never understood that about him or Sara.”

“You don’t like women or men,” Sara said, sipping her glass.

Malcolm added in agreement, “he doesn’t like anyone in any way.”

“I don’t,” Damien agreed. “Though I won’t object to life’s variety of...pleasure from time to time.”

Barry struggled to believe that demons sat around, talking. It all sounded relatively normal. A small part of him wanted to ask questions, but the larger part of him was far too uncertain to draw attention to himself in a room full of blood-drinking beasts.

Malcolm spoke to Barry. “Ey, pet, is Eobard keeping you around for your blood only, or...are there other interests he has in you?”

Barry scrunched his brow. “What?”

“Leave him be,” Professor Thawne started.

“Oh, ah, want to hear this,” Sara said. “Eo’s fangs aren’t the only thing he’s sticking in you, eh, pet?” She grinned in a victorious way.

Barry looked from one face to the next, searching for some clue of what they were saying. Unfortunately, he gained no insight. They must've been referencing a vampire thing that the professor hadn't told him about yet.

The suspicion seemed confirmed when Professor Thawne exhaled and said, “I haven’t even had him that long. A few days.”

“Time really has no meaning for us,” Malcolm pointed out. “Well, which is it, Barry?”
“I don’t understand,” Barry finally said, throwing a cautious glance at Professor Thawne. “I don’t
know what else I could give a vampire, but I’m just...a...blood servant,” he grimaced a little at being
forced to say that aloud. "Is there something else?"

“Is he daft-?” Damien started.

“-or that innocent?” Sara finished.

Professor Thawne made a face of disapproval. “It would surprise you.”

“It’s this age,” Malcolm muttered.

“Oh,” Sara said, “I’ll bet you haven’t even brought it up to him-”

The professor settled forward. "Why would I?"

“Because it's obvious you want it, Eobard. However, he won't want it,” Damien observed in a cold
tone. “I wouldn't normally take you for this much of a fool, but apparently times have changed since
we last spoke. I know you're working on using your charms and patience, but you may as well go
ask a tree to dance.”

“You have drawn the wrong assumption, Damien,” Professor Thawne pointed out, tone dry. "No-
All of you have. I was amused enough by his silly efforts to make him a pet. He makes a good one,
and I want his blood, nothing more.”

Barry wished once again that he understood, but he kept his mouth shut.

“That's all well and good,” Sara said with a smirk, “but you don’t actually expect us to leave this
house until he knows, do you?"

“Knows what?” Professor Thawne muttered, rubbing his temples.

"Knows his options," she said with a smile. "I know you're the type of man who would let a possible
opportunity pass by because you didn't see it as one."

"I am not you, Sara. Don't assume."

“I know what you are, though. Or rather, what you like." Barry felt his frustration growing. It was the same frustration he felt when his studies didn’t go the
way he expected, and he couldn't figure out why. “What in the name of God are you all babbling
about?”

The four vampires turned their gazes on him.

Barry suddenly wanted to shrink into the couch.

“He wants to know, Eo. You can't argue with that."

"He won't want to after he does," Professor Thawne said with resignation in his tone. "Fine."

"Excellent,” Sara said. “Barry, you are aware of how a man and woman get together to make a baby,
yes?”

Barry felt his face heat a little. Marriage? How was this relevant? He nodded, though, a strange and
different anxiety unrelated to the vampires themselves growing in his gut.
“Okay, well, sweetie, some men get with men, and some women get with women in the same way...except they don’t make babies.”

Barry looked from face to face again. All of them were scrutinizing, like they were waiting for a response. Professor Thawne looked agitated, though.

Barry shook his head. “What?” He asked.


She chuckled in Barry’s direction, her face almost sympathetic, “oh, sweetie... You’re too innocent for Eobard.” She cleared her throat.

“It’s like Amor,” Professor Thawne spoke up in a decisive tone beside Barry.

Barry turned his head, the unease almost unbearable now. The vampire was suddenly far too close, he realized. Their legs were practically touching, but...why did that even matter? “That...book?” He asked, feeling his fingers curling into fists.

“Yes... Amorous congress. Held between two men...or two women...”

“But...” Barry’s face heated. “T-that’s...s-sodomy! I- You-!” He stood, realizing his anger was too great for the words he wanted to say. He stood.

He left the sitting room, Damien’s voice following him, “Well, he took that about as well as I expected.”

Barry avoided the library, the bedrooms and paced onward. He stopped after a minute and just stood in the hallway between the kitchen and the dining room, struggling with what he'd just heard. He should’ve known the truth, after the book... But he hadn't really thought... Hadn't really believed the professor was like that, in spite of his tome. It was just a damned book, one that the professor had found amusing enough to add to the library - nevermind the special case it was kept in.

Oh, what an idiot I am! An absolute fool! Why did I ever agree to this?

“I told you to stay close to me tonight,” Professor Thawne's voice hit his ears. He was in the hallway already. "It doesn't make a good impression on the guests when you disobey me so openly."

Barry stared at the wall, biting the inside of his cheek. “I suppose I should not be so...shocked. You’re already a bunch of demons. What’s one more unnatural act on top of murder and-”

A fist caught his lapel and yanked him close to the professor, startling Barry into silence. His heart pounded at the dark anger in the vampire's eyes. They almost seemed to glow, the faintest hint of red glimmering deep in his irises. “There is nothing unnatural about us, Barry,” he hissed. “What is unnatural are the radical, cultic beliefs that have perverted everyone's mind! It's not the first time, and it won't be the last until. Every. Single. Human. Is. Utterly. Insane!”

Barry shook his head, unable to stop his words, in spite of the situation. “We’re insane? Men don’t get with m-”

The vampire leaned closer, fangs bared. “I have lived for the past two thousand years, Barry! When I was turned into a vampire, I was still me. I was never a demon. I didn’t take over a man's body! This is the body I was born with!”

Barry's hands shook and his heart was racing, but he still forced out his angry words, “Are they right,
then, on you wanting more from me? Is that what you’re doing? Trying to seduce me into your sinful ways?”

Professor Thawne’s expression shifted before hardening further. The grip on Barry's collar tightened, sending cold fear through his body. The immortal's voice was as icy as a winter’s night when he answered. “No. You are a fleeting afterimage in time, my blood bag - a mere mortal servant, and that’s all I want you for. A day will pass and you will die, from my perspective. I could kill you now, if I wanted. I could drain every last drop of blood in your body, because that's all you are to me.”

Barry looked away, shivers threatening to overtake his body. “Fine,” he said in a small voice, his common sense reasserting itself. “Let’s just leave it at that. I’m getting a headache. I don’t want to argue anymore.” He wasn’t sure why he felt the tiniest twinge of pain in the center of his chest. Maybe it was from being reminded that he was indeed a nobody. That was all he'd ever be, even to this vampire.

But that didn't matter, really. Why should it?

Professor Thawne's fingers uncurled from his coat lapel and released their strong hold. The professor turned and started to pace back down the hallway.

“I...” Barry started, adjusting his coat and smoothing it out.

The professor paused. "Yes?"

"J-just one question?” Barry asked after a moment, feeling his face heat again. It kept bothering him, this thought he was having. Curiosity was maddening, indeed.

Professor Thawne looked at him over his shoulder. “What is it?”

“I...I knew that sodomy happens between men...but Sara said...it also happens between women... I...how is that even possible?...I mean...women don’t have… How do they...without...without…?” He couldn’t put it into words. He gestured vaguely, embarrassed.

Professor Thawne’s eyes glinted. His lips tilted - whether from amusement or annoyance, Barry wasn't sure. “I am not a woman, Barry. Ask Sara. I’m sure she’d love to tell you. Now come along and show that you actually listen to me. This is ridiculous.”

Barry nodded and followed him back down the hallway.

“Feel better?” Malcolm asked Barry when they reentered the parlor.

“The first time’s always the hardest,” Sara said before Barry could respond. “Better sooner than later.”

“That’s enough,” Professor Thawne said, “the discussion is over.”

“Actually,” Barry started, “I have a question, S-Sara?”

The vampires looked at him attentively.

“Really?” She said with raised eyebrows. "Well, cutie, I’ll try to answer in a way that is sensible to you.”

Barry swallowed. “I...uh...you said that...women...um...get with each other like some men do...”

“Yes?” Her tone abruptly changed, becoming harsher, more challenging. "And?”
Barry hesitated, but pushed on. His inquiry was perfectly reasonable. “I…uh, if they…want to… How…do you…? How does that work without a-”

Sara jumped to her feet, her chair tilting behind her, nearly falling before slamming back down. Her fangs were bared, eyes narrowed. Barry flinched back from where he stood, retreating a couple steps. He managed to stop himself from taking more through great effort.

“Oh no,” Barry heard Malcolm say.

“He is really too innocent for this,” Damien responded.

“I usually prefer the blood of a woman,” Sara said in a vicious tone, “but as addicted as Eobard seems to be to yours, I’m sure I’ll enjoy it all the same.”

Barry’s fear spiked. He stared at the vampire in all of her power. A tingle ran through his body, and he realized there wasn’t a single part of him that didn’t feel respect for her. She was beautiful and terrible and ruthless, and he could see that all in a single moment. Her clothing or her looks didn’t matter. She was a vampire. He couldn't speak. He cringed, turning his face and waiting for the worst.

He sensed a quick rush of movement in front of him, but nothing happened.

He risked a glance.

Professor Thawne was standing before him, back to him, his fangs bared at Sara. He growled, “he is mine, Sara. You may not discipline, hurt, kill, or partake of my blood servant, just as I cannot with yours. It is our law. None of you will lay a finger on him unless you desire to suffer the consequences! You know I am faster than all of you - you will not win if you try to fight me!” He looked animalistic as he said his words. His eyes turned to each vampire in turn. Malcolm leaned back, looking uncomfortable, and Damien gave no discernable response. The professor's eyes moved back to Sara's.

They glared at each other, seeming to be waiting for one or the other to give.

Barry cleared his throat. "I'm s-sorry," he said in Sara's direction. She turned her murderous attention on him, and he shuddered. "I d-didn't mean to o-offend you. I didn't know, but I should have. I should've realized that was a personal question for you..." he trailed off, feeling a blush crawl up his neck.

After a second, Sara’s fangs vanished. She looked at the professor. “Ugh, it’s not worth a fight, Thawne. Teach your pet how to control his tongue, or I’ll rip it out the next time he’s so disrespectful to me. He may be your pet, but it's my honor I'll defend.”

“Oh,” Damien said before Professor Thawne could reply, "I’m sure he will teach him all about controlling his tongue one day, my dear."

Sara gave him a disbelieving look and scoffed.

Professor Thawne turned to Barry. Barry flinched away from his angry eyes. “You are a fool, Bartholomew Henry Allen. I was not being serious when I told you to ask her. You will stay in my room tonight, and you will not argue with me about it. This is so I know you will not come to harm.”

Barry nodded mutely, resolved to stay completely silent after that last confrontation. In the back of his mind, he wondered how the professor knew his full, real name.
Barry stared around the master bedroom, uncomfortable to be in here. This was the first time he had entered this room, and the shades of red and maroon and burgundy made him uneasy. It seemed like he’d just gotten used to his own bed, and now he had to switch - to the professor’s. But he didn’t want to dwell on it, just wanted it to be done. He dressed down quickly, readying himself to climb onto the bed. He wanted this day to end.

His thoughts drifted to what Professor Thawne had said earlier.

"When I was turned into a vampire, I was still me. I was never a demon. I didn't take over a man's body! This is the body I was born with!"

Barry shook his head. How was it possible for a man to still be himself after such a transformation? The demonic traits were all there. There were the claws like a cat’s, sliding from smooth skin, so unnatural. He thought of the curve, the pointed tip, the sharpness that had sliced through his skin and bonds. And fangs, also unnatural, hiding in the monster's mouth. He closed his eyes, recreating the memory of the vampire’s lips against his jaw, the memory of sharp canines on his neck.

He wanted to push it away, but he was searching for something.

It struck him what he was searching for...for the heartbeat that'd thrummed against his back that first night. Yes, he remembered, even if he hadn't thought about it too hard then. Professor Thawne had a heartbeat. Before Barry had become the vampire's walking kitchen, he had thought vampires’ hearts didn’t beat. He’d thought they didn’t have reflections. He’d thought they were demons strolling around in the bodies of dead men.

He was wrong on the first two, certainly...the last one...

He didn't know anymore.

Barry heard the door open and turned to find Professor Thawne stepping into the room, icy eyes on him in that usual way of his. The anger was gone, though. “Don’t be afraid, Barry. I won’t let them touch you. I will watch over you the whole night.”

“Right,” Barry replied. “And I’m supposed to sleep with you watching me.”

“I can read, if that makes you more comfortable.”

Barry shrugged. "Do whatever. It won't make a difference," he said, sitting on the end of the bed. "Vampire friends. I didn’t know you’d have that.”

“I sired Malcolm. The other two... Well, they owe me their lives. And even if they didn't...a vampire craves company. They are...there if I need them.”

Barry stared at the tall window on the other side of the room that let moonlight filter in. “It just doesn’t seem like vampires would want...other vampires around.”

“You should ponder that for awhile.”

Professor Thawne sat on the other side of the bed. Barry wasn’t entirely comfortable with it, but he didn’t say a word. He pulled the covers up and slid under them, lying down and settling himself into a comfortable position. He closed his eyes, breathing steadily. There was an unfamiliar scent in the bedding, and he found himself wondering if it was the professor's. He pushed the thought away and tried not to think too hard at all.
The noise reached him.

Barry, almost dozing, rolled over, snapping his eyes up, alarmed. He saw the silhouette in the open doorway, and fear flooded him.

Damien Darhk leaned against the frame. The moonlight made him as pale as a corpse. Barry's heart rate sped up.

There was movement, and Barry glanced at Professor Thawne beside him. The professor was grinning hard at Damien. The expression was threatening, Barry realized. He returned his attention to the intruder, waiting to see what he'd do.

Damien spoke, "you know he'll be dead within a year, right, Eobard? Mortals are and always will be fragile. It's why our kind are advised against taking blood servants."

The professor only blinked slowly, head tilting.

"So damned stubborn." Damien sighed and rolled his eyes. He left the room. The door swung shut.

Barry tried to calm his racing heart as he rolled back over. He put his head against the pillow again, but his stomach still churned. Damien would've drained him if Professor Thawne hadn't been there. He would've been powerless to stop it. Could he really trust the professor to keep him safe? It seemed likely that he would die very soon in the vampire's perspective, so what if Professor Thawne decided Damien was right, that it didn't matter if he died in one day or thirty years? What if-?

He felt a hand on his back, between his shoulder blades. His eyes widened. “Relax,” Professor Thawne murmured close to him. “Damien’s just testing me, even if he knows better. It's just his way. He won’t come near you... They'll be gone by tomorrow evening.” The hand on Barry's back started moving, rubbing his shoulders gently. Barry focused on the motion, letting it calm him. It was odd...but he did feel safe. The hand ran up his neck, into his hair, brushing his scalp, before wandering back down to massage his lower back.

He drifted to sleep like that, feeling safer than he had in months.
Barry's attention was pulled from the book when he heard footsteps enter his room, announcing the arrival of the vampire. The door was open, sure, but he still wished the professor would wait to be invited in before entering his room. Apparently living for thousands of years made vampires lose their manners on top of human decency.

A glint of light caught his attention. His eyes snapped to the object occupying one of the creature's hands. It was metallic. A knife, he realized, sharp and deadly. In the other hand rested a pair of scissors. Barry felt a cold eruption of goosebumps over his arms. He closed his book and stood, crossing his arms as nonchalantly as possible.

"What are you so anxious about now, Barry?" Professor Thawne asked, sounding impatient. "And don't try to say you aren't. You know I can hear your heart beating faster."

Barry tensed but didn't say anything.

Professor Thawne's head tilted in that unsettling way of his. He narrowed his eyes before glancing down at his hands. "Ah, it's the knife, isn't it?" He looked back up. "You can relax. I won't kill you with a razor. I much more prefer the feeling of my teeth sinking into flesh."

Barry felt the blood drain from his face. He considered if running would do any good at this point. No. It wouldn't. There was no outrunning this creature.

Professor Thawne burst into laughter.

Barry jumped, heart rate ratcheting up.

"Barry," the vampire said with amusement, "Barry, Barry. You're expression... I was not being serious."

"Oh, like when you told me to ask Sara?" Barry snapped. "Neither joke is very funny! You need to learn how humor works!"

"As the one who has lived for two thousand years, Barry, I can assure you it is not my knowledge that needs to be enhanced. You are far too uptight, to take everything so literally."

"How am I supposed to be relaxed around you?"

Professor Thawne sighed. "You already know you need not fear me. You are far more useful alive as we've already established... Unless, of course, you still have some lingering, foolhardy notion of being capable of vanquishing me."

Barry didn't reply.
"Why would I harm you?" Professor Thawne challenged.

"What's to stop you from changing your mind? What if one day you decide my blood is starting to get old, or it really wasn't that good in the first place?"

The vampire stared at him unnervingly. "If that is the logic you are using, you know nothing I can say will make you feel better. All I can tell you is that I won't kill you. And if you won't take my word for it, the door is open for you to leave."

*And go where?* The thought echoed through Barry's head. *Back to a dead-end life with barely anything to eat and a bed that will feel like a rock now?* Barry chewed the inside of his cheek, agitated. He didn't like being reminded that both of his options weren't exactly appealing, which basically meant he didn't really have a choice. He decided that changing the subject would be best. "What are those for?" He inclined his head toward the tools.

"Your hair. It could use some tidying. And that scruff on your face needs shaved."

"Maybe I want a beard," Barry shot back.

"You were shaven when I first found you," the professor pointed out. "You obviously preferred it that way."

Barry exhaled. "So you're a barber now?"

"I learned many tricks over the centuries. I needed to occupy myself somehow."

"But you didn't learn how to tailor clothing?"

"When will you stop being so difficult, Mr. Allen? Isn't a week enough time for you mortals?"

"No amount of time is going to make me trust you," Barry muttered.

"You are trying my patience, Barry. Either walk out the door for good, or sit back down in that chair."

Barry only hesitated for a moment before retaking his seat. The vampire placed the scissors and razor on the nightstand before moving around the room, doing something Barry couldn't see unless he turned his head. He didn't. The silence was disquieting, especially when the only noise to break it was the sound of the vampire's activity. Professor Thawne left the room for a minute before returning.

Barry fidgeted. "I...suppose I should...thank you."

From the volume of the activity, he could tell the professor slowed marginally. Barry turned, unable to stand not seeing what he was doing any longer, to catch his look of confusion. "For what in particular are you thanking me for?" Professor Thawne asked. He was holding a bowl of water now, and some soap.

"For..." Barry felt heat rise in his cheeks. "...not letting the other vampires...harm me before."

The professor snorted out laughter. "First, you argue with me, and now you are thanking me about something that happened three nights ago. I do not understand you, Mr. Allen."

Barry shrugged again, looking away as his face burned more. "Uh... Sorry. It's...harder to...know what I should or shouldn't do, now."
"Why do you complicate everything? You need not thank me for me fulfilling my end of the bargain. You should expect it, and not feel like you owe me more for doing what I should."

Barry sighed and faced forward. "I know... Why is this so complicated for me?" He asked the empty air.

"I suppose change is hard for mortals," the vampire conceded. "Your lives are so short, you won't experience even a fraction of the amount of changes I have, after all. I've gotten better at flowing with the changes of time instead of resisting. Life is fuller that way. It is something you may want to consider."

Barry tapped his fingers against the armrest as the water bowl was sat nearby.

"What are you exactly?" Barry asked, still not liking the quiet. "You keep acting like I don't understand vampires. So explain them to me."

"We are...different, obviously. There is too much to really explain well in one conversation..."

"Tell me a little, at least."

"Even with your interest in science, what you may not know, is that life is ever-changing. The hypothesis of the transmutation of living creatures put forth by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck last century is not so far from the mark. I believe I have some books in my library on my kind and also Lamarck's theories. That is the best I can offer. Otherwise, you should know we are fortis, gloriosus, et liber. Strong. Glorious. And free."

"And arrogant," Barry muttered

"Something you admire," the professor had the audacity to say.

Barry frowned hard at the wall. "That wasn't a compliment."

"I know. And we also both know you didn't deny what I just said."

"It was implied!" Barry said, "of course I don't admire someone like you!"

"Someone like me?" The vampire repeated, tapping the knife on the bowl. "Do you mean a vampire or-"

"All of it. Everything," Barry muttered. "It's-" wrong, he was about to say, but the instruments the vampire now held made him lose his confidence.

"Do not always be so sure of yourself, Mr. Allen," the professor said coolly. "You yourself have exhibited a certain arrogance by attempting to track me down and actually believing you could succeed, especially at ending my life. Had you raised a mob, or whatever you intended, every person you dragged into it would have been killed. All of them. But not just them. The entire town - every last man, woman, and child... And that all would have been on you, Barry Allen. I might have spared your life then if only so you could suffer from regret."

Barry wasn't sure why he kept arguing with the monster. It was obvious the vampire would never see mortals as anything but a means to an end, like they weren't even people.

Professor Thawne's fingers hooked into his lapels, and he unbuttoned Barry's coat. Barry let him take it off, stoically ignoring the sensation running through his body. The professor was too close, as usual, and Barry couldn't get used to it. It felt like every cell in his own body was simmering with
energy. Professor Thawne adjusted a cloth around his shoulders and stepped in front of him. Barry’s heartrate accelerated. He swallowed. The professor’s eyes snapped to his neck, then trailed lower. Barry fidgeted, feeling like he was being picked apart visually. He despised it.

“W-what?” He stumbled over the word.

Professor Thawne’s finger touched his temple. Barry stiffened, all of his focus drawn to the single point of contact. "There’s a pulse here. And the skull is also thin... Did you know? This spot...puncture deep enough...and you would die."

Barry could just feel the tip of the sharp claw. He shivered, tension building in his stomach. And the professor actually expects me to trust him with my life? Insane! He hated how fragile he felt like this.

"Though shallow and non-fatal head wounds bleed a lot," The professor continued. "Convenient, at times, for feeding without killing prey... However, you are the first I've spared in a long time."

Barry couldn't speak. Professor Thawne pressed in, face against Barry’s neck in the span of a heartbeat. Barry felt hands on his arms now, thumbs in his elbows. His body felt...charged by this, energy coursing through his veins. It didn't feel quite like fear, but it shared similarities with such an emotion. He tilted his head, an angle that exposed his throat more, the full realization of what he'd done only occurring to him after the action had been performed. Professor Thawne’s lips seemed to hover over the pulse point in his throat, breath warm on his skin. It felt like there was no escape, even though Barry didn't even try.

“P-professor Thawne,” he said, gripping the chair hard enough his hands began to ache.

“You’re so addicting, Barry,” the immortal whispered. "I can't wait to taste your blood again. To feel it run down my throat."

The vampire moved. Barry flinched. He felt a light weight on his torso. He gazed down to simply find the vampire’s ear pressed against his chest, over his heart. “You’re heartbeat is gorgeous and strong...but so fast. Are you afraid again, Barry?” He purred, his thumbs tracing up to the inside of his elbows, pushing in slightly.

“I think so.” Barry frowned when he realized what he'd said. It made no sense. He couldn't even think straight, it seemed.

The professor chuckled. “You think so, huh?”

“You don’t know what it's like,” he said, voice cracking. He cleared his throat before continuing. "You have no clue what it's like to be nothing more than a walking blood sack, to have no value as a person."

Professor Thawne drew back. He seemed to search Barry’s gaze. "I do apologize that you find this arrangement...humiliating. I hope that in time you will see it is not. I have done everything I can think of to make you comfortable here." He nodded before pulling away entirely to grab the scissors.

Barry exhaled, body relaxing marginally. He didn't have the strength to reply.

"You know, when blood servants were more common," the professor continued, "they were seen as...valuable, but not like property, as you currently think. It was a consensual trade-off and the vampire was expected to care for and protect the servant. I suppose they were less like slaves and more like...butlers? Those who mistreated their servants were looked down upon, sometimes even punished. And the pets who felt mistreated were allowed to leave. Vampires used to have...something similar to law... Of course, those traditions died out when our numbers dwindled..."
Now we are loners, and there is no governing us or how we treat mortals. You can thank the zealous hunters for that. They killed my first kindred partner."

Barry shifted. "By partner, you mean-"

"Yes."

Barry felt unsettled all over again. "You kill others, too. What is a society without morality?"

"You tell me, Barry. Your kind barely accept each other as it is, and far more mortals have killed other mortals over petty reasons than vampires have for survival purposes... I admit I have no remorse in killing, but some of my kind choose not to kill, too."

Barry shook his head, giving up.

Professor Thawne took his time with the haircut, snipping the dark locks of Barry’s hair, and Barry held his breath. He had a sinking suspicion every brush of the fingers on his skin was intentional.

Professor Thawne rubbed soap across his jaw and throat when he was finished with the haircut. Barry struggled to maintain his composure when the razor slid across his skin. He stared hard at the wall, though he wasn’t able to focus on what he was seeing.

Barry flinched at a sudden, sharp pain. The knife had bit him. "You-!"

"Apologies. I haven’t done this to another in some time."

Barry’s stomach knotted, and he met the intense gaze, furrowing his brow.

Professor Thawne’s eyes flicked between his own, hazy. "You’re bleeding."

"Like that’s an accident!" Barry accused far more loudly than necessary.

"It was." The vampire’s lips landed on his neck, no warning, just there. Barry suppressed a shiver from running down his spine as the vampire took the spilled blood for himself. This was not something he needed the vampire to understand about him, now or ever. This entire situation was utterly ridiculous, almost on a comedic level, and he almost laughed. Almost.

"I love your blood, Barry Allen."

Barry tried to calm himself, but his muscles wouldn’t relax.

Professor Thawne finished shaving him, avoiding any further slips of the blade. He toweled the remaining soap from Barry’s face. “Perfect,” he murmured. He stepped away.

The professor encouraged him to look in the nearby mirror, so Barry complied. It was really only the second time he’d studied his reflection since coming to the manor, and he was a little shocked. He wasn’t sure why he looked so different now to himself. It felt like it was more than just the clothes and the hair, though he couldn’t pinpoint why.

“Is that not you, Barry Allen?” Professor Thawne asked and Barry couldn’t help but think the vampire’s voice sounded proud. He didn’t quite feel comfortable with it, like he really was just a pet to be admired. The vampire leaned closer. "You really are quite cute like this, Mr. Allen," Professor Thawne said right by his ear. He pulled back and left the room.

Barry’s face burned, and he turned away from his flushed reflection. He traced the smooth skin of his jaw with a finger. He knew his features weren’t the most masculine, and the thought of it... The way
the professor had said "cute"...had made him feel...inferior, somehow. It didn't help that he had...tendencies.

He didn't want to be like a... He swallowed the nauseated feeling down. Now was hardly the time for those thoughts.

Barry had begun going through the notes in the labs the past few nights, finding that he enjoyed reading them. There was a lot of research, a fair portion of it having been written into books to the point that the chemistry laboratory had its own mini library, though all the books were just countless, bound notes by the professor himself. He was reading through one that was centered on studies involving the nightshade family of plants when he heard the door open. He glanced up.

"Hey," he greeted before looking back at the page.

"You seem to like the lab." Professor Thawne approached him. "But I also recall you said you were interested in astrology, too."

Barry glanced up at the professor. "Uh- yeah. I am."

"Then come with me."

"Where to?" Barry asked with confusion.

Professor Thawne turned. "Find out. Or don't. Your choice." He walked out of the lab.

Barry hesitated. With a sigh, he sat the book down and followed after the professor. Professor Thawne didn't say anything when he caught up, and Barry fell into step with him. He followed the vampire outside where the bright moonlight shown down from the heavens. The scents of damp grass and mud drifted from the ground, and a cool breeze stirred the greenery. Barry was surprised when Professor Thawne headed straight across the lawn, toward the dark tangles of thickets and forest beyond. Barry trailed after until he reached the line of trees, where he stopped uncertainly.

Professor Thawne also paused and looked back. "Ah, I forgot. Mortals are basically blind in the dark."

A cool hand grabbed Barry's. He started to protest but Professor Thawne cut him off, "stay close, and I will guide you through the woods, Barry."

Barry nodded, then stopped. "Yea-"

"I could see you nod, Barry."

"Oh- right."

They treaded the soft floor of the woods. It was a little chilly. The air was fresh and cool, but the breeze was almost nonexistent in the thick woods.

Barry found he had trouble focusing on anything but the small contact between him and the professor, the hand on his. Yes, Professor Thawne was a vampire, but it occurred to him that he hadn't really gotten to have close contact with anyone - and no one he trusted - in such a long time. He wasn't sure if he should be letting himself have this with the vampire; it wasn't like he could have meaningful contact with a demon - an evil being, right?

But Professor Thawne insisted that vampires weren't evil...
But they killed...

Barry wanted to groan with frustration, so he pushed the thoughts away. What was a little contact? It was unlikely he'd get to have it from a regular person any time soon, after all. This wasn't really anything, if he was honest with himself, especially compared to- Well, that didn't matter now.

He glanced up from watching his footing to the vampire. Professor Thawne's gaze was on him. He saw the glimmer of moonlight in his eyes. He found his heart beating just a bit faster in response. The vampire gripped his hand tighter, or maybe that was just how it seemed. It could have been a misperception.

Professor Thawne's lips twisted into the faintest of grins. Barry returned to focusing on his steps again, unsettled.

Professor Thawne spoke, "The ground inclines upward here, so be more careful with your footing."

Barry focused through the dark. He realized he could make out the hillside now. They traipsed onward, and the trees began to thin out. The moonlight shone bright through the branches and there was a breath of wind that rattled the leaves here. The forest gave way to a plateau that stretched out and descended into a grassy plain. Barry found his gaze drawn upward. The galaxy itself spanned the sky, littering it with stars, ripping the black apart with sheer brilliance.

"It's beautiful," Barry murmured, a sigh of appreciation escaping him.

"It is," the vampire said, catching his attention.

They halted after a few more steps.

Barry's breath caught in his throat when he looked into the icy eyes. It wasn't how he was being looked at, he told himself. It wasn't that he saw something in the gaze besides a predator looking at his prey. He forced himself to look back forward.

"Come on," Professor Thawne said. "Take a seat."

"You want me to get grass stains on my new clothes?" Barry asked lightly.

"They shouldn't get too stained, but the stains can be removed."

Barry settled in the grass, and Professor Thawne sat close to him - close enough he could feel the vampire's body heat. Barry realized their hands were still locked. He hesitated. He should probably draw away now that there was no real reason not to, but there was warmth in the grip, reassurance, and Barry missed having such contact. With reluctance, he tugged his hand away, folding his arms to himself and not looking at the professor.

"What are we doing here?" Barry asked.

"You said you were interested in astronomy. We're here to look at the stars."

Barry's eyes moved up, admiring them. "You said you did too," he recalled. "Have you always liked it? Or is it something else you picked up over time?"

"I have always been intrigued by the heavens, Barry... Something tells me you have, too." Professor Thawne paused for a moment. "How much do you know?"

"Not much," Barry admitted.
"Well... Let's start with Draco," the professor decided. "Do you see it? It is like a serpent." He pointed.

Barry searched until he picked out the connection of stars like a long tail and body with a head at the end. "I see it."

"Draco is Latin for Dragon. It is one of the 48 constellations listed by the 2nd century astronomer Ptolemy. In Greco-Roman legend - legends of Greek and Roman origins, Draco was one of Gigantes who battled the Olympic gods for an entire decade. The dragon was killed by the goddess Minerva and tossed into the sky upon his defeat. As Minerva threw the dragon, it became twisted on itself and froze at the cold North Celestial Pole before it could right itself. Some said if it were to thaw, it would awaken again and once more wreak havoc in the world.

"Though, obviously, that is but legend," the professor said. "The stars are not living beings, though I'm sure you knew that much."

Barry replied, "of course. But it's an intriguing legend all the same."

"Something to keep in mind, Barry, is that those people believed that tale with as much faith as some do other tales today."

"That's ridiculous. People should know what is a legend and what isn't. Those who don't are crazy."

The professor laughed, and Barry wasn't sure why. When he stopped, he had an odd expression on his face.

"What?" Barry asked in confusion. "Is this more vampire humor I don't understand?"

"Not exactly... Let's move on," the professor said without explanation. "I have a decidedly fascination with ancient Roman and Greek cultures. Always have. I wish my memories were less foggy on the time period. Time has a way of...passing you by when it is irrelevant to your existence... Ah, Perseus, that constellation there, one also defined by Ptolemy, also one named from Greek mythology. Some depicted Perseus holding onto the head of Medusa in this constellation..."

"I know some of Perseus' legends. I have- well, had, a book on Ancient Greece."

"Do you find it fascinating?"

"Some parts of it," he answered. "More so when I was younger." Barry couldn't help but think the vampire sounded incredibly human for once. He wasn't scary or creepy, or even commanding...he was just a man who loved astronomy.

"I see," the professor nodded, then continued with something that resembled eagerness in his voice, "anyway, this constellation is located near several other constellations named after ancient Greek legends based around Perseus, including Triangulum and Andromeda to the west, which cannot be seen this time of year, but you can see Cassiopeia and Camelopardalis to the north, Aries and Taurus to the south, Auriga to the east..."

Barry listened with rapt attention as the professor continued describing the stars and constellations, and his own interest grew with each passing second. Their conversation flowed with ease now, and Barry let himself be carried away, not defensive, instead completely enraptured in the knowledge. He absorbed the details and forgot he was listening to a vampire talk. Forgot about everything but that moment.

After what felt like hours, the conversation on the stars dwindled. Barry had a sense he should be
tired, but he didn't feel it in the slightest.

"May I ask about your claws?" Barry said to break the silence.

The professor looked at him with what appeared to be skepticism, but then shrugged. "Alright."

"May I...see your hand?"

"Of course."

Barry took it, ignoring the fluttering sensation in his stomach as his fingers touched the pale skin. "How do they work?"

"Have you ever seen a cat's claws before?" the professor asked.

Barry nodded.

"They are like that. They are not nails, obviously. Nails lay on the surface of the skin of mortals and provide a very minor protection for the tips of the fingers and toes. These...are for hunting, I suppose. The mutation of a vampire causes an excessive growth in the top portion of the finger and toes, and adds the claws."

"Wait, you have claws on your feet too?" Barry asked.

Professor Thawne chuckled. "Yes. I do."

"Oh, sorry, please continue."

"In any case, the bone splits and folds, the skin on the finger stretches to make room, and a tendon to control the claws forms between the split bone pieces - which are also connected with a ligament. In a resting position, the claws remain partially sheathed. All I have to do is flex my hand a certain way and they unsheathe fully."

Professor Thawne demonstrated, moving his hand, letting the claws slide out. Barry had never really seen them up close. They were...quite fascinating, but also larger than he'd previously thought, each one about five to seven centimeters long. "It must be a painful process to grow them," he commented.

The vampire snorted. "The process of becoming a vampire is more painful than you can imagine. There is no part of it that is not agony. Though no birth is painless...mortals are just blessed with the capability of forgetting theirs."

Barry shuddered. He let go of Professor Thawne's hand. It'd suddenly become very obvious that he'd forgotten who he was talking too.

Professor Thawne frowned for just a second, before saying, "we should return to the manor so that you may sleep. I almost forgot mortals sleep so often."

In spite of himself, Barry found his chest flooding with regret. He wasn't sure what he was regretting exactly, but he knew that he longed for that easy conversation again, longed for it with someone who he could trust and understand.

He stood up, brushing at the dew and grass that had collected on his clothes. When he was done, the professor took his hand again and guided him back through the forest to the manor. The walk back seemed shorter than the one there.
Barry was standing in front of his bedroom all too soon, turning to face the professor. "Thank you," he said, "for showing me that spot...and telling me about the constellations."

Professor Thawne's brow raised. "That's the second expression of gratitude in one day, Mr. Allen. That's quite an improvement of your general attitude towards me."

Barry felt his face burn, to his own confusion. He was glad that the hallway was mostly dark. Though that didn't matter much to a vampire, he knew, a thought he chose to ignore.

"Still," Professor Thawne continued, "there is no need to thank me. If I shall be in your presence for years to come, I'd prefer you to not be a complete idiot."

Barry frowned. "You ruined that."

"I know..."

Silence followed, and Barry looked away.

"Esto quod es..."

He felt it then, the slow tracing on the palm of his hand. His heart skipped hard, and he pulled his hand back once again. "I- I should just- G'night," he mumbled out hastily before slipping into the room and shutting the door hard behind him. He stayed there, frozen, until he heard the footsteps recede. Instead of going to the bed, he slid down the door and sat against it, burying his face in his palms, in the one hand that was still warm from being held and the one that was cold from being exposed.

He thought of what it'd be like to embrace the professor, the thought of those lips, leaning forward, touching his, just barel-

No.

I can't think like this.

He tangled his fingers into his hair, clenching it. Where did it go wrong? No, that wasn't an accurate question. Where did he go wrong?

When he was younger? There was the girl, Iris, beautiful, kind, with eyes so warm. The things he'd promised to her, the things they'd shared. But...then it was gone, without warning or explanation. It was like she'd vanished into nothingness.

And these feelings-

He shut the thought out. This didn't even compare. How could he compare such a natural relationship to this...sick disease of a feeling in his chest. This was a vampire who looked, sounded, spoke, breathed, talked, and even smelled like a man. His hands weren't soft. They were rough. His voice wasn't gentle, it was arrogant. His personality wasn't accommodating; it was overbearing, dominating.

There was nothing remotely natural about wanting the soft things from him, and even less natural to want the not-so-soft things-

Barry's throat tightened. He willed it all away, all the feelings, and, and-

He dragged himself from the door, dressed down, and flumped onto his bed, the turmoil inside
keeping him wide awake for too long. He tossed and turned, thinking of what he would give to be someone else. He longed for a life that had never spiraled into this madness, one where he would be happy. He curled into a ball, wishing for everything he couldn't have, but so dearly wanted.

Chapter End Notes

Translation
Fortis, gloriosus, et liber - strong, glorious, and free.
Esto quod es - Be what you are
Barry paced the hallways of the manor until he reached the professor's office. He'd only been in it once, on the tour, but he assumed this was likely where the professor had locked himself away today. He wasn't in any of his other usual spots. Barry knocked lightly on the door. At least he had manners.

"Come in, Barry."

Good, so he was here. Barry fiddled with his sleeve when he stepped into the professor’s office. Professor Thawne was positioned with his back to Barry, perched on a stool, painting on a large canvas. Barry stopped short. Instead of a gruesome portrait of blood and death he was half-expecting to see- Well, he wasn't expecting this. It was simply a field with the sun shining on it. It was beautiful, filled with flowers and distant mountains and trees. A bee made of painstaking detail hovered close to the viewer.

Barry blurted, "that's nice."

The professor gave another stroke before setting his brush down and facing Barry. His clothes were perfectly clean of paint despite his current activities. "Why, thank you, Barry. I have been working on and off at this craft for a few centuries now... What did you need?"

"Well." Barry hesitated. "I want to return to my house and retrieve a few things."

"You mean your shack?"

"Yes, sure, that. I had some books, a family heirloom, my mom’s wedding ring… I want to bring them here." He trailed off, shuffling his feet.

Professor Thawne eyed him with a keenness that made Barry feel uncertain. "You are just now asking after two weeks of living here?"

"I...didn't feel confident approaching you about it before," Barry admitted. "You didn't even trust me when we went to see the tailor not to inform the locals you were a vampire."

The professor snorted. "And you think I trust you now?"

"I honestly don't know... I just don't want to wait longer. I need to get my stuff before someone-" he glanced at the floor, "-robs the place." He forced himself to return his focus to the frosty gaze. "You could..." he sighed, hating having to suggest it, "...accompany me if you really don't trust me." He would much rather go alone, to have some time to himself away from the manor - which was starting to feel like a lavish prison in many ways - and everything related to it, including the professor. Especially the professor. "I don't know if you'll take my word, but I promise not to tell anyone. I'm not that stupid, especially to put them in harm's way."

"Alright, Barry. I'll trust you. Don't make me regret it, or you will regret it even more... Then again, I suppose it is unlikely anyone would believe you."

Barry winced.

"On the off chance you do decide to tell anyone, I will kill them...and force you to watch as I drag it out and make them suffer... Are we clear?" It was barely a question.
Barry nodded.

The professor sighed, shifting until he was leaning forward a bit. "I don't think you understood me, Barry? Are we clear?"

"Yes, professor," he said, a cold chill creeping up his spine.

"Better... Just return before sunset so I know you have not betrayed my trust." He turned in a dismissive manner and picked up his paint brush again, adding a fresh red stroke to one of the flowers.

Barry watched him paint for a moment longer before leaving.

It occurred to Barry when he arrived in town that he hadn’t gotten a chance to tell anyone that he was still alive and well since his abduction, which could be problematic. People searching for him would put their lives in danger. While it was extremely unlikely they would track down the one responsible, Barry couldn’t take that chance. The vampire would have no mercy. Well, he told himself, it had been two weeks already, so he figured another hour or so wouldn't matter. He would gather his things first.

He arrived at his house with some apprehension, hoping no one had helped themselves to his things. It wouldn't be the first time...

He moodily shrugged that thought away.

He entered his small, former abode. After being at Professor Thawne's for so long, it was hard not to feel put off by it. It appeared even worse than he remembered. The faint scent of ash, wood decay, and mold hung in the air, and he acutely noticed the flaws he’d once been forgiving of. Boards warped with water damage. The desk worn down and jutting little groups of splinters all over. The misshapen bed with stained sheets and crooked legs. Windows layered in dirt and dust. Utensils in dire need of replacement. In the cubby, a half chunk of bread had gone stale and some vegetables were beginning to rot.

Barry felt like he didn't belong. And yet, at the same time, there was something calming about being back here. As much as he honestly enjoyed the things he now had access to at the professor's, he missed a time when a vampire wasn't watching his every move, wasn’t absently drifting monstrous eyes down to his neck every time they were in the same room together.

He shook his head. He had to be back by dark, he reminded himself.

He went through the little rundown house, filling a bag with those things that were important to him - a portrait of his parents commissioned in better times, his mother’s wedding ring, a pendant, the few books he owned and some other personal effects. He didn’t find a single hint of the vampire research. He knew that professor Thawne must’ve long since disposed of it. Agitation surged through him. He’d spent so long on that research, had stuck his neck out - literally - and taken ridicule for it. It was unfair that it was just gone. Though it seemed like for the past few years, his life was one unfair event after another anyway.

Hefting his bag, he left the "shack" without looking back. There was no need. He wouldn’t be returning. He progressed further into town, heading toward the blacksmith shop.

"Hey, Mr. Tanner," Barry greeted the smith who was tinkering with a plow by the forge.

The smith looked up, wiping his brow and squinting. "... Mr. Allen? Is that you?" he asked with
what seemed to be an amazed blink.

Barry nodded, smiled. "Yes. I-

"What is that you’re wearing?"

Oh. Barry, reminded of his fancy clothes, felt a little sheepish when he glanced down. A pang of guilt struck him. He used to be poorer than the dirt he currently stood in, but now he must’ve looked pretty well off, like the kindness the smith had previously shown had been unnecessary.

Barry shrugged. "Well...something came up. I got an...opportunity."

"That so? Must be with a rich fop." A strange look came over the smith's face. "You look kind of different, though. Besides the clothes."

Barry raised a brow. He self-consciously checked his cravat to make sure the bite marks were well-hidden. “What do you mean?” he asked, fidgeting.

"You're still skinny as hell, but you look...hmmm...healthier. Yeah, that's it. Healthier."

Barry shifted, rubbing the back of his head. He didn't know how to respond to that. Anything he might say could come across as boasting. He had better food now? More space? A bathtub? It would just sound like he was currently being pampered. If only he could explain the reality of the impossible situation he was in. But that was kind of the whole reason it was impossible, he reminded himself. He also reminded himself that it wasn’t completely hopeless. He’d find a way to fix this mess and see the vampire answer for his countless, terrible crimes.

He just had to be patient.

"Must've been quite a good deal," Mr. Tanner concluded.

Barry rolled his shoulders again. There was a faint, sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. "Yeah- We- Anyway, I- I just wanted to let you - well, everyone - know I’m fine. No need to worry or send any more search parties after...me..." he trailed off when he was greeted with an expression of pure confusion.

"Worry? Search parties? What ever do you mean, Mr. Allen?"

Barry felt a frown crease his brow. "I...I was gone, vanished."

"You were? I figured you’d probably just quit. Not like it was my business."

Barry felt a sinking feeling in his chest. Was it true no one even knew-? "I...didn’t anyone know I wasn’t home?" He asked, his gut burning with a strange desperation. He hid it through great effort.

"Why would I go to your home if you didn't want to work anymore? Like I said, not my business if or why you'd quit. Turns out I was right. You got a better job."

"R-right, o-of course. I guess I just thought there might be a...misunderstanding," Barry said, nauseated and trying to focus. "Glad there wasn’t... Th-thanks, Mr. Tanner... I’ll be going now..."

After a stuttered, uncertain farewell, Barry turned and walked away. For some reason, his eyes felt irritated. It had to be from the dust being kicked up by the breeze on the road.

The sun was sinking lower in the sky when Barry made it back to the manor. He took his things directly to his room and deposited them there by the bed. He struggled with an incredible ache in his
chest that he hadn't managed to walk off on the way back. It would be gone by the following morning, he told himself, but he longed to take his mind off of it. He went down to the chemistry lab, hoping to occupy himself. It was difficult, but he made an effort to continue his study of the vampire's notes.

He was leaning over a table, staring hard at various sheets of paper, when he heard footsteps. He let his gaze be drawn to their owner and straightened himself.

Professor Thawne gazed at him severely. "Why didn’t you inform me you had returned?"

Barry shrugged. "Figured you would know," he responded, eyes drifting back to the desk. "Can't you hear me through the walls with your oh-so-powerful hearing?"

There was a pause. "...I see. Try not to assume that much in the future. I only hear what I am focusing on… Are you ready for dinner?"

"Actually, I'm not very hungry tonight," Barry replied with a shake of his head. "I don’t think I’ll have dinner."

The professor sounded perplexed when he replied, "are you feeling ill? You’ve never refused dinner before."

"I… Yes, in fact. I have a slight headache."

Professor Thawne folded his arms and paced over until he stood on the other side of the desk. "What is the matter?" He asked.

Barry shot him a look. "I just told you-"

"Oh, Barry. When are you going to learn that you aren’t adept enough at lying to fool me?"

Barry's gaze skittered away. "It’s nothing."

"You certainly don’t seem to think so. Did another of my books upset you?"

Barry had to roll his eyes to be reminded of that. "It wasn’t your ridiculous joke books- Don’t worry about it."

The professor snorted. "Then it must be something. You didn’t tell anyone about my vampirism did you?"

"N-no, of course not," Barry said, unnerved by the prying. He idly shuffled some notes, but he wasn't even looking at them now.

Professor Thawne walked around the table, standing a little closer. "I’ve noticed the lab has become a little messier recently," He said. "Enjoying it?"

Barry gave a slight nod.

"I am certain you were not acting this miserable before you left… So I have to conclude something unfortunate occurred while you were in town." When Barry still didn’t give him an answer, Professor Thawne continued on. "Look, Barry... I realize I'm not...the most comforting person to be around. I'm not good with understanding the emotions of those who don't live beyond a century, either... But you may as well tell me."

Barry frowned. "You really won't let this go, will you?"
"No."

"Fine..." Barry sighed, reluctantly meeting the vampire's unrelenting gaze. "This probably won't...seem like a big deal to you, but...if you want to be bored so badly by my petty human problems, then I'll tell you." He looked back at the desk. "Anyway, when I got to town earlier, I figured the townsfolk must have sent out search parties. I figured I should let them know I wasn't...dead, to help protect your secret... I...I was gone for two whole weeks, after all. So I went to tell the blacksmith - the first person who would have known I was gone. And when I got there... Well, he knew I hadn't shown up for work, but...he didn't even know I was gone at all. For two weeks, not a single person knew."

"And it occurred to me then...how truly alone I really am. How long I've been alone... I...I could have vanished from reality that night - you could have killed me - and no one would have noticed. I'm sure you knew that, though, seeing as you were ready to murder me in my own home... Someone no one would miss."

Barry gave a rough, choked laugh. "I was so focused on proving that I was right, I didn't even notice I fell into your preferred victim category." He swallowed at the lump forming in his throat. "If I died tomorrow, not a single person on the planet would feel the slightest twinge inside of them. There isn't a single person in this world who cares what happens to me. I was - am - meaningless to everyone...and I didn't even notice until now." He bowed his head more at the burning in his eyes.

"Yet...I think I knew that deep down... It didn't used to be like this..." His vision was blurred now. He felt the tears sliding down his cheeks. No. Things shouldn't be like this. He shouldn't be here in a vampire's mansion. He shouldn't have thought all the thoughts he had since being left with only his mind for company. He should've had his family, should've had the woman he promised marriage to. But-

A sudden light pressure landed on his shoulder. He jumped. It had to be a hand, he realized.

"Even if you are meaningless to them," said a soft voice by his ear, close enough he could feel warm breath on his skin, "you mean something to me. You mean enough that I want to take care of you, keep you healthy and from danger. If you vanished from me, I would not stop until I'd hunted down those responsible, and I would destroy anyone if they so much as put a single finger on you, Barry Allen. If you vanished, I would be acutely aware of your absence from this world."

Barry's breath hitched a little before he realized himself. Tears dripped onto the desk. His voice felt weak, but he forced his words out, "you're just saying that because I'm your property. My only value to you is the fact that I'm your dinner. If something happened to me, you'd just hunt the person responsible down because you'd be angry at losing a resource..." He gave a noise of indignation. "Yes. That makes me feel much better."

More tears leaked from his eyes.

"You're more than just dinner, Barry. You're sometimes mildly amusing, too. You're also very intelligent."

Barry shook his head, frustrated. "I just don't understand. Is this punishment for being a sinner? But everything happened before I..." He trailed off as he realized the words that had slipped out.

Professor Thawne's voice was intense. "There is no universal being punishing you, Barry, for being who you are. By that assumption, I should be having the worst luck for all my supposed sins. I have had plenty of good fortune in my time along with my share of misfortune. No, Barry. Some simply have more good fortune than others, at different times. Sinners don't exist. It is a manmade construct... A man with your perception of science and capacity for knowledge should know this."
"Then why?" Barry asked helplessly. "Why did this all happen the way it did!?"

The hand squeezed his shoulder. "What if there isn't a reason?" Professor Thawne murmured. "Is that so horrible? To know you're part of a chaotic universe with no order? I personally find it more comforting than any fairytale out of an old, worn-out, fever dream book."

Barry twisted around and threw his arms around Professor Thawne, gripping him and putting his face against his shoulder. He inhaled his scent, the scent he remembered from every time the professor stood too close. The scent he recalled from the bed in the master bedroom. The scent he’d had all around him one disquieting night when a powerful hand had traced his back through soft sheets. It had felt shockingly safe. And it did now, too, hanging on for dear life. It felt so much better just to embrace someone else, to have contact he hadn’t gotten to have in so long he could barely remember what it felt like.

In response, arms full of strength embraced him back.

Barry yanked out of the warm embrace, gasping air through his constricted throat. "S-sorry," he choked out, retreating fast until the back of his thighs collided with a desk and he froze. He wiped his tears away as fast as he could. "You know, I should- I should probably just go lie down." His hands were shaking.

"Barry," Professor Thawne said, unmoving, expression unreadable. "If you require physical contact for your emotional health, I am willing to give it. I told you I would do anything for your comfort and pleasure."

"N-no. No. That's completely unnecessary." Barry gave a shaky chuckle. "I'm fine. Really. Th-thank you for listening to me. And, uh, for that-" he waved his hand to vaguely indicate what had just happened. "I-" He ran a hand through his hair, avoiding the vampire’s gaze. "Wow, this lack of sleep is really going to my head, huh? I just need more rest. I'm going to go lie down now. But don't worry, I'll have breakfast when I get up." He pivoted and high-tailed it out of the lab before the vampire could say anything.
Dreamlike

Barry stared into the mirror at what was reflected back at him - the scars on his neck. The bites were healing, but slowly. Too slowly. He could still see the very first bite, the one that had sealed his fate. The vampire’s fangs had gone deep, driven by an intent to kill. He shuddered at the memory of it, of recalling how it felt to truly think he would die... There were two other lighter marks on each side of his neck, the more shallow bites from another night he didn’t want to remember too hard either. They were almost invisible, but still there. He ran his finger over them. The sensitive ache they’d held was gone, but he could feel their texture under his touch, could see the way they marred his skin.

He hated them all - not because they were blemishes, but because they showed his servitude to the vampire, they were symbolic of his status now as a pet. As dinner. He was barely human to the beast that owned this manor.

He scowled at his reflection.

He saw the movement in the mirror, heard the faint footsteps. He was getting better at hearing when the vampire approached from behind, he noted. That was probably a good thing.

Professor Thawne came into full view behind him in the mirror. It was odd seeing him so close like this, from a third-person perspective. It accented his inhuman traits - pale skin, sharp claws, unblinking eyes, his outdated sense of fashion. His familiar voice drawled, “what is the problem this time, Barry?”

Barry stifled his annoyance and turned around. “Nothing is.” He started to move away - though that required stepping around the professor.

“I thought I told you not to bother with lying to me, Barry.”

When he had put a few steps between them, Barry paused. He twisted around and stared straight into Professor Thawne’s sharp eyes.

The vampire tilted his head in his typical way. “Are they troubling?”

“What?”

“The scars. They trouble you?”

Barry almost said no, but he reminded himself that the vampire was right about how useful his lying had been in the past. “Do I really have to answer that?” Barry finally bit out with a bitter laugh.

Professor Thawne steepled his fingers in front of him. His brow furrowed just enough. “No. I suppose not. It doesn’t take much intelligence to conclude that they do.”

“Does it really matter? They aren’t going anywhere. I’m just going to have to deal with it, aren’t I?”

The professor dropped his arms, and in a heartbeat, he was uncomfortably close again. He always was.

Professor Thawne reached up and yanked at his own collar.

Barry watched in confusion. “What are-” He stopped when he saw the cloth pulled back to reveal an almost familiar scar on the professor’s neck, two pale pink-ish marks. “A-” Barry did a double take, “-a bite mark? How-?”
“I was once human too, Barry.”

*Oh.* Barry felt odd. He recognized that this was the vampire trying to make him feel better again. Trying to keep up with his emotional health just so his blood was good, he reminded himself. It wasn’t genuine care for his wellbeing. He snorted. “Don’t you vampires have healing abilities?”

“Yes. However, the bite that turns us never fully heals. It’s permanent. And it is not fully understood why.”

“Oh...” Barry lifted his hand. “May I-?” He reached for the mark, was curious if it had the same texture as his own-

A clawed hand seized his wrist, preventing him from touching the scar. “I’d rather if you didn’t,” Professor Thawne replied, eyes narrowed, though his voice was unbothered. “I apologize. It’s not you. It is just extremely rude in my culture to touch another’s sire mark...*unless* it is done as a form of intimacy between two close vampires.”

“You mean-?” Barry looked away, feeling his face heating up with embarrassment. “I-uh, of course, Uh- sorry, I wasn’t ...sorry...” A *form of intimacy between two close vampires* rang in his head. Just how close? Just how intimate? How much had he just embarrassed himself in the vampire’s eyes? Just what had his naïve gesture *suggested*...

“I know, Barry, that you were unaware, which is why I just told you.” Professor Thawne released his hand. “I only showed it to you so that you might understand that the mark doesn’t define you as some lesser human.”

God, did this vampire *read his mind*, too?

“You should be proud, that you yet live in spite of all of the odds. Anyone who bears such a scar on their neck has survived something terribly dangerous.”

Barry stared at him, shaking his head with disbelief because he realized he felt better.

Barry exited the library, holding a book under his arm. It was a good one, with an interesting mystery woven into the text. He appreciated a good fiction novel at times. It occupied his thoughts as he strode down the hallway and passed through the living area. *Ben Browne is sure to have-

He stopped short when his eyes landed on a strange sight, indeed.

Professor Thawne was lying on his back on one of the couches, hands on his chest, eyes closed, breathing gentle and slow. It was quite odd. Barry was sure he’d never seen the professor *sleeping* before. Drawn to the unmoving form, his feet carried him over without much thought. Professor Thawne looked so...*relaxed.* Barry studied his face. He traced the lines of it with his eyes, almost forgetting how to breathe.

*I could get used to this look.*

It was incredibly human.

There was a stray piece of hair stuck out over the professor’s brow. It bothered him, so he reached forward to brush it to the side.

The next moment was a blur. He was flipped onto his back, colliding hard with the carpet, pain coursing through his body. He felt a tight pressure around his throat, a heavy weight holding him
down. A set of claws pressed just enough into his face to be uncomfortable, and he found himself
staring up into unblinking eyes that had been softly closed before. Sharp fangs were bared. There
was such a wild contrast in this hostile look when the relaxed one was so fresh in his mind.

He couldn’t breathe. His entire body went completely limp and wouldn’t respond.

Professor Thawne blinked a few times. “Barry?” he asked quietly. The hand around Barry’s throat
loosened. “What ever are you doing?”

Barry shifted. “I-I-uh, w-was checking on you.”

Eyes narrowed. “Checking on me?”

“I’ve never...seen...you...sleep...” Barry trailed off, clearing his throat and swallowing. For some
reason, his legs felt incredibly weak even though he wasn’t standing on them.

“I see. You should know that I am a light sleeper, then, who is used to living alone, so consider
carefully before you do something like that again.”

Barry nodded. His senses tingled, but he didn’t think it was entirely from the adrenal response of
having just been unexpectedly thrown to the floor. “You can get up now,” he pointed out.

The claws retracted, but the professor didn’t otherwise move. “You are uncomfortable?”

Barry felt his face warm up again. “S-should I be?”

“I suppose that depends.” Professor Thawne leaned forward. Barry couldn’t help but feel like the
professor was messing with him now. “Are you scared right now?”

Barry’s heart jumped into a quick rhythm, but he forced himself to gaze back. “No,” he whispered.

“Good.” Mercifully, the professor climbed off of him and stood. “Wouldn’t want to ruin your
appetite.”

Barry was left feeling a little adrift. He looked up when a hand was offered to him. Professor
Thawne’s brows raised. Barry inwardly shrugged and took the offered assistance, letting the vampire
pull him to his feet with ease. He quickly reclaimed his hand and straightened out his clothes. “After
all, I suppose you must be hungry,” Professor Thawne added.

Barry noticed his book on the floor and picked it up.

"Ben Browne,” the vampire said. “A good book... Come on. I was planning to show you how to
cook tonight.”

“Wh-” Barry started, then stopped. “Right. No servant. We have to do certain things ourselves.”

“Exactly. Glad to see truly you are capable of common sense, Barry.”

“Actually, I do know how to cook a little.”

“Anything beyond boiled vegetables?” the professor asked blandly.

“Um...I can bake bread.”

“Huh. I suppose that is better than nothing. Either way, I intend to show you how to cook something
worth eating.”
“What are we making?” Barry asked as he followed the vampire into the kitchen.

The professor looked at him. “An old recipe I’ve had for a few centuries. Simple, but good. It’s made from chicken and milk as well as a few spices and garlic... I picked up the ingredients earlier, so it’ll be perfectly fresh. Go ahead and start the stove.” The vampire began to gather pots and pans.

“I know you do things for my comfort,” Barry said as he moved to light the stove. “But why go out of your way to cook for me? I don’t need fancy dinners to be comfortable. I’m used to light meals.” He stoked the flames to life, using it to keep his attention focused on something other than glacial eyes.

“I am merely returning what you’ve given me - wonderful dinner.”

“I- Oh...that actually makes sense...”

By the time Barry was done getting the stove fire going, he found the professor had already gotten the ingredients together. they were exactly as described- some raw chicken, a container of thick milk, a set of various herbs and spices. There were also apples set out to the side, presumably to compliment the meal, as usual.

Professor Thawne said, “Let’s begin.”

The professor showed him how to cook the meal. It was simple and easy enough. It started with simmering the milk and throwing the herbs and spices in, all while the chicken was boiled separately. As the meal cooked, the silence was filled with that strangely normal conversation that’d been occurring between them more and more often lately. They talked about the book, and the professor seemed amused by his interest in it. Barry still struggled to pair these moments with the ones where the vampire was so obviously the homicidal monster he was. After all, Barry could still remember the first time he’d seen Professor Thawne, a striking man that had seemed to transform in one cruel moment to the dangerous creature he’d been tracking. Barry could easily remember the vicious fangs and wicked grin, the feeling of his body pinned against the wall, that sense of helplessness-

He exhaled, stirring the sauce. This existence was truly the strangest any person could have, he reflected.

“That’s good,” Professor Thawne said. “Sit down.”

Barry took his seat at the side of the table. The vampire filled two plates.

“You’re dining with me?” Barry asked with some surprise.

“Yes, I am.” Professor Thawne sat at the head, just to the side of Barry. “As I told you before, vampires occasionally consume human food for pleasure.”

Barry wasn’t sure how to feel about that. He hadn’t thought the vampire would ever be with him while he ate. He reached for his silverware, trying to ignore his uncertainty.

“Barry.”

Barry paused, looking up. “What? I didn’t think a vampire would give grace before a meal,” he joked.

To his surprise, Professor Thawne chuckled. Then, he seemed to hesitate, which was strange, even for him. Professor Thawne never deliberated. “I assume you will not want to,” he finally said, “but there is tradition with this meal...to hand feed an individual the first serving they will ever have of it.”
Barry processed that, settling back in his seat. He furrowed his brow. “That...is the strangest tradition. Especially since it’s all covered in sauce.”

Professor Thawne’s eyes didn’t even blink as he stared intensely at Barry. “Yes, I expected it would seem odd... I cannot explain the nuance of this tradition without you having prior esoteric understanding of vampires.”

“You’re saying this is a vampire recipe?”

“In a sense. It is common among vampires. Most like to add blood to the sauce... Normally it is pink in color. We call it the rosy chicken dinner...but as you can see, that name doesn’t fit this modified version.”

Barry hesitated too, but realized that trying to decide one way or another left him blank. Why not? He finally asked himself. He didn’t have a good answer to that, so- “Alright. I’ll play along in the tradition.”

Professor Thawne smiled, expression softening somehow. Barry found that he enjoyed this look too. It made him feel more at ease. The vampire grabbed his plate and cut a bite-sized piece off the chicken. He picked it up, claws dripping with white sauce. He raised the bite to Barry’s lips. Barry leaned forward and took it, ignoring the accidental scrape of his teeth on the professor’s skin. He chewed the tender meat slowly.

He closed his eyes and enjoyed the flavors flowing over his tastebuds. He swallowed. “It's really delicious.”

There was another bite waiting for him when he opened his eyes.

“I am pleased to hear you enjoy it. It is a favorite of mine.”

Barry consumed the tasty piece. The tip of the claw caught at his bottom lip when the hand pulled away, just enough to be slightly uncomfortable.

Wasn’t this just supposed to be a tradition of the first bite? Not the subsequent one? Barry’s eyes flicked between the cold ones focused on him...except they didn’t feel as cold as he remembered. They were warm. Maybe it’s more than just wanting my blood to taste good. Maybe he wants someone to...take care of. Being a vampire has to be a long and lonely existence, after all...being unable to marry, have a family... Even with other vampires living just as long as him, he doesn’t interact with them much, doesn’t live with them. And the interactions he does have...certainly do not seem the kind to make someone feel needed.

Maybe I’m more than just dinner after all. Barry felt warmth spread from his head to his toes at the simple thought.

By the time Professor Thawne had another piece for him, his first three fingers were fairly covered in the mouthwatering sauce. Barry accepted the bite, indulging himself, but he also realized he was indulging the professor, too. After swallowing, Barry leaned in and took one of the clawed, sauce-covered fingers into his mouth.

“Barry...?” Professor Thawne murmured.

Barry licked against the pad of the finger, enjoying the delicious flavor. There was a sharp pain as the claw sliced the soft flesh of his tongue. He grunted, but it was the professor who pulled back - right along with the expected apology that came with him accidentally cutting Barry. Barry opened his mouth and felt blood dripping down his lip. On instinct, his hand caught the droplets. He looked
at his palm, to the gathered bit of red there, then back up to the vampire’s now hungry eyes.

The professor grabbed his hand, pulled it up, and licked the droplets off. Barry suppressed a gasp at the sensation of the warm tongue running across his sensitive palm. “Well,” Professor Thawne said with a sharp grin that didn’t reach eyes. “I suppose I should thank you for the mutual dinner experience, Barry.”

Barry didn’t say anything. The moment felt surreal, dreamlike, and he didn’t allow himself to think too deeply about it. The vampire was eyeing his lips. They tasted metallic, had blood on them, and a part him, hoped, wanted, wi-

Professor Thawne leaned in, probing his tongue along them. He slid his tongue into Barry’s mouth, and Barry let him without the slightest protest. Barry felt every minute sensation as the tongue slid across his, taking the blood. Tension built in his stomach, the kind that felt too good.

The professor broke the contact and murmured, “if you wanted my tongue in your mouth, you could’ve just asked. I didn’t need the extra incentive.”

Barry felt his face began to burn. It was a joke. He should laugh, not blush like a silly, love-struck young girl.

“I like to see you flush like that, Barry. It means the blood is closer to the skin. Very appealing. Plus, the color red really does suit you, even like this. Especially like this.”

The tone had become less joking now, it’s resonance slithering like a serpent into his thoughts. Barry flinched. His sore tongue suddenly felt more sore, and the taste of blood was all too sharp. He couldn’t forget the way *that* had just felt, and now he realized *why*.

Barry stood, “I don’t think I shou-”

A strong hand grabbed his wrist, preventing the intended retreat.

“Do you take me for an idiot, Barry?” Professor Thawne asked. “Look at me.”

Barry did so reluctantly. The professor’s eyes were no longer warm. They were scalding. Barry couldn’t blame him after the trouble he’d gone through to make him this special dinner, but he didn’t want to face the vampire right now.

“Why do you keep running away from me?” the vampire demanded to know. “You can’t just keep doing this every time you get uncomfortable. Have some courage and face it. Work through it.”

“I- you- *This*. This is your fault,” Barry hissed. “Nothing is ever *normal* with you.”

“If you were not comfortable with that contact, then why did you start it? ...You should’ve known I wasn’t about to let perfectly good blood go to waste, even if it came from your mouth.”

Barry almost rolled his eyes but stopped himself, falling back on silence in his loss on how to reply.

“Oh?” Professor Thawne’s eyes gleamed. “Did you not find that as repulsive as you thought you would?”

Anger surged through Barry. “You don’t get to say that! It was very repulsive having your tong-” He stopped. “Will you just let me alone already?! This is why I don’t try to work through this with you! We just wind up arguing. I don’t want to keep arguing with you-”
“It doesn’t have to be an argument.” Without warning, the professor yanked him closer and slammed their lips together. Barry’s breath left his lungs as he felt a set of claws scrape his scalp in the way he’d fantasized. His entire body shuddered, and his thoughts went blank as the tongue touched his yet again.

He heard it. The moan. So human and needy that it couldn’t possibly be from a vampire, right? Barry had thought such a noise would sound like a guttural snarl, like a demon’s voice.

He wished he could hear more.

He shoved that thought away quickly.

The professor drew back with a dark smile. “You are making this unnecessarily difficult on yourself. If you don’t want something, then just say so....”

“I already told you,” Barry said weakly. He found his strength though, at the grin, to reinforce his words with finality. “You knew I found that incredibly repulsive, and you still did it again.”

“Yet you did not resist. When will you ever stop lying?”

“You caught me off guard! Just stop doing this! If you don’t, I will definitely leave and return to my shack as you so like to call it! I’m done tolerating this disgusting behavior! I may not enjoy living in the dirt, but it’s better that way if you won’t respect me and my wishes!”

The professor let go of him with a rough motion, scowling. “So be it. Have your loneliness, your little black hole free of emotions where no one can comfort you unless they meet some predetermined physical standard.”

“How is this about my comfort?” Barry’s voice was almost shrill.

“The things you do that bother you, such as sucking my finger to the point you cut your tongue on my claw occur because you bottle all of your feelings. Then, you freak out when they manifest in these unexpected ways. You require physical contact, Barry, for your emotional health, and even a blind man could see it. But because you are so terrified of even the remotest intimacy with someone like me, this happens.”

“You are unbelievable!” Barry shouted, going rigid. “You know nothing about me or what I feel or what I need. You just want to feel so smart and special don’t you? Caring for your pet, looking out for his needs because he’s helpless! You must need that to fulfill your...sick desire to be with a man. But guess what? I don’t need you. And I never will! So you can look elsewhere for your gross fulfillment! And you must think I’m so fragile if you truly believe I can’t survive without a god-damned hug from you.”

Professor Thawne blinked, his jaw clenching. His voice was almost scary with how quiet yet charged it came out next. “Do you see the way you resort to shifting the blame? This has nothing to do with me or what I want, so do not waste your breath. I am not easily manipulated in arguments. It is obvious with how angry you are now that I have hit your insecurities. You should really work on them. Why don’t you start by asking yourself why you’re so angry?”

“I’m angry because you’re the foul demon who does the manipulating.” Barry glared as hard as could at him. “You manipulated me into staying here after you abducted me and tied me to a chair, manipulated me into this arrangement... You washed the dirt of hard work from my skin... Intimidated me into fitting into this lifestyle... You could have forced me into this in the beginning, but you didn't because that would have made me too rebellious, huh? Instead, you’ve made me
"I am certain a man with no will does not shout so loudly... And I did not force you because I didn't feel it worth the trouble."

"Yet you destroyed my options! You made me see I couldn't go back. Made me see that I have nowhere to call home...that I'm completely alone... I can honestly say I hate what you've done to me. I hate you."

Professor Thawne barked a sharp laugh. “And you call me unbelievable. It would have occurred to you one fine day that you were alone even if I'd never stepped into your life. I didn't make you lonely, Barry. Your people did that just fine on their own... You really should listen to the things you say.”

“Oh, I do,” Barry growled, hands balling into fists. “And you should too. From now on, stay away from me unless you need to feed.” He left the room.

His body shivered viciously by the time he was down the hallway. He was angry, so angry, but not just about the argument. He was angry that he hadn’t resisted the...kiss, angry at his body’s reaction, angry at how he wanted more and was now aware of it, angry that the professor barely cared about his inner turmoil and would play with his emotions after claiming his value, after saying he would do anything for his mental, physical, and emotional comfort, after-

*Just stop, okay? He told himself. The only reason this has any weight is because I keep letting it affect me. I don’t have to. I don’t have to let the things he says and does get under my skin. I just need to get better at avoiding him and only interacting with him when I absolutely have to.*

He retreated to his room, locked the door behind him, and settled into his chair, trying to calm down. He picked up his new book. He probably wouldn’t be able to focus right now, but he would damn well try.
Barry emerged from his room to use the latrine. After he finished with that, he found himself in the cool night air on the lawn, silently cursing the slight pain that was left over in his tongue from the still-healing cut. He hated the reminder it was of how dinner had turned out.

A small noise reached his ears across the lawn. It seemed unrelated to the other night sounds - familiar even. He was certain he'd heard it before. He focused on it. It was small and helpless in nature. Giving in to curiosity, he followed the sound, arriving at the shed on the property he hadn't previously paid any mind to. He realized he recognized what the sound was.

It was the mewling of multiple kittens.

He quietly peered through the cracked open door where moonlight poured in, illuminating the shed's contents. Amidst a pile of tools, cloth, and some stray strands of straw, a sharp pair of yellow eyes looked back. There was a mother cat curled into the softest spot in the mess nursing a group of kittens. She seemed wary, tail flicking just a bit.

Barry stayed where he was outside and crouched down to make himself smaller. "It's alright," he said, keeping his voice as non-threatening and soft as possible. "I won't hurt them."

She stared back, unblinking.

Barry sat down with his back against the shed wall, listening to the occasional mewl of a kitten. Every time he glanced in, the mother still had one eye on him, even when she would reach over to groom one of the small bundles of fur. Barry's eyes traveled around. He noted that there was a pan sitting nearby containing some old table scraps left behind and another holding water.

*The professor must have left these.*

It surprised him. He hadn't expected the two thousand year old vampire to care about a group of stray cats.

As he watched the cat grooming her kittens, he reflected how there was no real reason for her to do so. So many living things that weren't human sought emotional attachment- attachment that was arguably unnecessary. No one living being absolutely needed others to touch it, hold it, give it comfort, and yet... This little cat family was comparable to a woman holding a small child in her arms, kissing it gently on the forehead...

If adoration, companionship - *love, even* - was so omnipresent, felt by so many beings...then why couldn't a vampire be capable of experiencing these things?

But vampires were different in more than one sense of the word. He'd seen in that wretched book that their definition of love more closely represented some twisted lust... But maybe they could experience a sense of companionship that was closer to what humans felt? Possibly. Barry still remembered what it felt like to be held in his misery.

He left the shed after a murmured farewell to the family of cats and returned to the manor. He forced himself to visit the kitchen, bracing for the possibility of finding the professor there.
He didn't; it was empty. The food had been covered, but remained otherwise undisturbed save for the professor’s plate, which was gone. Barry’s was still there, still had the chicken on it. As his eyes roamed the remnants of the failed dinner, he spotted the piece of parchment by his silverware.

_Barry,_

_I hope you are aware that I can’t leave you completely alone. I do live here. However, I will respect your space as much as possible. If you decide to finish dinner, I will let you do so by yourself. Also, I apologize for what happened. I realize I pushed to hard. In truth, I do not wish us to be this confrontational._

~E

Barry sighed. Now that he was calm, he realized the argument had actually been petty. He shouldn’t have tried to retreat like that. He could have just stopped taking bites of the food, he reflected. If he’d asked, Professor Thawne would have stopped. After all, the vampire was getting better at considering his own comfort. And he should have remained calm when explaining his problem to the vampire. He’d had his ear, and it would have probably improved the situation. Blowing up had been silly and irrational.

However, he didn’t really want to admit that to the vampire. He didn’t want to deal with any level of smugness from him. And his still-sore tongue agreed with him.

He was pretty hungry, he realized. He hadn’t gotten much of supper before the argument had occurred. Whether or not Professor Thawne would keep his word of giving him space - and Barry didn’t know why he wouldn’t - he was determined to not let anything about the vampire's presence bother him this time. And if he was truly uncomfortable with something, he would just tell the professor.

He sat at the table, uncovered his meal, and sliced a chunk off the remaining chicken. He put it in his mouth. It was cold now, but still quite delicious. Even this meal cold was better than the stuff he used to eat on a daily basis. He finished dinner with quick, hungry bites, all while ignoring the pain in his tongue, and left his plate in the sink.

He felt much better now. His stomach was comfortably full. Earlier, he’d made nice progress on his book, and he was fully aware of his soft, empty bed waiting for him.

He returned to his room, and his eyes landed on the bag leaning against the nightstand, the same bag he’d brought back from his former abode. He’d been ignoring it because of the ache the thought of its contents brought to his chest, because of the reminder of his loneliness.

_In truth, he thought, I don’t need anyone. Some of the strongest people had to go it alone. Now it’s time I accept it, after denying it for so long, and become stronger, outgrow the pain._ He clenched his right fist with determination. The vampire was right about one thing. Change was hard. But he knew it only gave him resilience.

He pulled the portrait of his parents out of the bag, sitting it on the nightstand. He was grateful for this much, at least. Alone or not, he didn’t want to forget what they looked like. It was getting hard enough to remember Iris… He would hang the portrait up later, he decided. Barry dug the rest of the contents out, reaching his mother’s wedding band at the bottom of the bag.

He stopped to admire it. It was well-crafted, though silver instead of gold. His family had never been wealthy. His father had become a doctor to help people, not to exploit them for profit like some did, and this was the best he could afford at the time. At least, that’s the story he’d been told by his
mother long ago. Barry took the ring by the chain it dangled on and lowered it into the night stand drawer, gently closing it.

He tossed the now-empty bag aside and blew the candles out. He settled into his bed for the night.

“Shhh...no one will miss you...”

Barry’s eyes snapped open, and he gulped in a deep gasp. He blinked and fumbled blindly for a minute, trying to pull himself up. Once he did, he sat there, back against the headboard, heart thumping too quickly. His blurry eyes began to focus. He rubbed them quickly until they cleared. He recognized outline of his room in the silver moonlight shining in through curtains. He shuddered. He didn’t quite remember what he’d just dreamed, but he had a vague impression of demonic crimson eyes, serrated claws, black fangs, and of feeling like he was about to die.

Even if he wanted to fall back asleep to that horrible feeling again, he wasn’t sure he could. He pushed his covers off and slipped his feet into his boots. He left his room to walk through the manor. It was still and quiet, almost soothing. He steadied his nerves this way before stepping out into the moonlit night for fresh air.

His breath caught in his throat.

Standing by some shrubs. Professor Thawne was staring out into the dense trees on the edge of the property as if he was distracted by thoughts. He didn’t turn, even though Barry was certain the vampire was very much aware of his presence.

Barry knew it didn’t make sense for him to not turn around and go immediately back inside. He’d told the vampire to leave him alone, after all. Approaching him was contradictory. Still, the words he’d said at dinner had been spoken in anger, and he felt he should at least put them back on speaking terms, if for no other reason than convenience. He would have to communicate with him sooner or later, and trying to ignore him completely was foolish. Like the note had said - this was the professor’s home.

The professor still didn’t turn when Barry drew closer. “It is unusual for you to be up this late, Barry,” he said in a breath of air. "Or should I say early. Dawn is only a few hours off."

“I woke up and couldn’t go back to sleep,” Barry explained. “Nightmare.”

“Do you wish to tell me about it?”

“I...don’t really remember it well.”

“I see.”

A few seconds of silence passed by.

“Do you dream?” Barry asked.

The vampire chuckled in response. “Always so curious about us foul demons, Barry.”

“I...” Barry swallowed. “I’m sorry I said that. It was...petty...”

The vampire exhaled. "Do not worry about it. I know not to give too much credit to emotional words filled with nothing but anger.”

Barry frowned slightly. “So you weren’t intending to give me space?”
“Oh, I was fully intending to. However, I assumed we’d have this conversation once you’d calmed down and started being rational again... And look- here we are.”

Barry sighed. Of course he did. He told himself he was going to be mature this time and let it go. He was done with the exhausting confrontations between them over petty things.

“Besides,” the vampire continued, “in spite of your intelligence, I realize you’ve lived your entire life believing only demons and monsters are capable of what I am,” Professor Thawne’s eyes looked up at the stars, glimmering. “I understand it’s hard to realize that real life isn’t so easily defined...”

Barry’s chest inexplicably tightened, and he looked away. He didn’t know what he was feeling.

The professor went on in Barry’s silence, “and to answer your question - I do dream. I imagine you must think I dream of hunting innocence, of blood-painted murder scenes, of screams from my victims. But the truth is, I don’t. Well, not often, at least. Also, my victims don’t scream. I’m a quiet hunter...”

Barry almost rolled his eyes, but stopped himself. “What do you dream, then?”

“Surprisingly, one of my reoccurring dreams are of the days before I was turned. You’d think I wouldn’t even remember those days - even other vampires tend to forget after so much time - but they are as clear as a winter’s morning in my mind.”

Barry blinked. Professor Thawne was right. He hadn’t been expecting that of a vampire. At a loss of how to respond, he finally said, “you miss them?”

“If you’re asking whether I feel nostalgia - yes, that I do. It would be impossible to live any length of time without feeling nostalgia. Do I truly miss them, wish them back? Not if it meant giving up being a vampire, Barry.”

“You don’t regret becoming one,” Barry said with knowing.

“Of course not. I have gained great gifts. Strength, clarity, eternity... I was and still am willing to pay the prices for them.” His voice was filled with absolute certainty. He truly believed being a vampire was a good thing. Barry didn’t know how to feel about that.

A chilly breeze swept over the lawn, and Barry shifted. “You said the process of becoming a vampire was agony.”

“It is. And difficult. Some of our experts say only one out of every ten turnings is successful. There are so many ways that it can go wrong... Especially if you’re inexperienced. A vampire’s first attempt at turning a mortal is almost always unsuccessful.”

“Was yours?”

“...Yes.”

“I just don’t understand why anyone would want to pay such a price to live a horrific, unending life of feeding on blood, killing other people, b-being shunned by everyone, living alone, regularly committing...” He left that sentence unfinished.

“I do not see my life as horrific, Barry, and I doubt any vampire would... Like I said...the rewards are worth it. Anything worthwhile takes sacrifice... If we did not take risks, if we did not let ourselves lose, what could you possibly gain?”
Barry looked at the ground. “That’s not what they say in the churches,” he muttered. “They call it giving into temptation and losing your soul.”

“We do not lose our souls when we find ourselves…”

A few more moments of silence occurred.

“You took a risk, coming after me,” the vampire said, breaking it, and Barry could just feel a glance cast in his direction. “You took a risk agreeing to this arrangement between us. You sacrificed some of your dignity to be my blood bag to protect others. It had nothing to do with temptation. And before you say it’s different, know that you were only being true to yourself in one way, as I was when I decided I would let myself be turned.” He pivoted to Barry, and Barry finally looked into his eyes. They seemed to glow. His heartbeat fluttered like an injured bird for a second.

He ignored it and cleared his throat. “I know I spoke of justice being my reasoning for tracking you, and of course, justice was and still is important to me...but I also truly wanted to know if I was right. I wanted to know if vampires were real or not- to see it with my own eyes.”

“And now you know...and also possibly understand a bit of what it’s like being true to yourself in spite of everything.”

Barry felt a bit uncomfortable for no discernable reason. He switched topics a bit. “How did you get turned?”

“It’s mostly a long story, best saved for another time, but let’s just say there were many moments that lead to it.”

“Were you scared?”

The professor seemed to pause, blinking with what may have been surprise for the question. “I... My sire was old and strong... I never doubted I would survive it.”

“But weren’t you afraid of the pain?” Barry asked. “Of the possibility of death? Of what you would become?”

Professor Thawne grabbed Barry’s face with both hands. Barry jumped, his tongue tingling with pain again, and he found that he wanted to pull away. He didn’t, though. The intense icy eyes seemed to freeze him in place. “In truth, Barry,” Professor Thawne breathed, “I was afraid of the pain then. I was younger, more vulnerable... That was, until he grabbed my face, like this, looked into my eyes so I could not look away, and spoke three words. Vos aeternum vivet.”

Barry lost his ability to breathe.

‘You will live for eternity,’ is what he said to me. And then the fear was gone.”

Professor Thawne released his grip. Barry broke eye contact. It was too hard to keep it. He scanned the dark woods. Nothing else was said for awhile.

The vampire’s voice was soft when he spoke again. “Meus amor...didn’t deserve to die with a silver stake driven through his heart by fanatical Christian hunters.” His voice dropped even more. ”By the time I learned what had happen, his body was already cold and lifeless.”

Barry didn't look at Professor Thawne. He wasn't sure what to say, so he settled for, “I’m sorry.”

“Are you?” The vampire sounded surprised.
“I... I can’t understand it...but what I do know is that...it must’ve been...difficult...” He thought of the family of cats in the shed again. If the litter was killed by a predator, the mother would surely feel their loss. Though, he had to admit, this was slightly different.

After that, they were both silent for a long while as time passed gently by. The trees and bushes whispered with wind, and the stars glimmered above. Barry thought about the night Professor Thawne had told him about the constellations, and how relaxing that’d been.

“It’s been a month since I’ve come here,” Barry realized with some shock. “It feels-”

“Shorter than that,” Professor Thawne finished.

Barry glanced at him. “I thought it’d feel longer.”

“Perhaps it is not as bad as you think?”

Barry snorted. He felt his heart beating faster. He rubbed his forehead, uncertain. “I suppose you should...go ahead and...get it over with then.”

The vampire’s brow furrowed. “What?”

“Feeding.” Barry clarified, swallowing. “Putting it off isn’t going to make it any easier.”

The professor blinked. “It is almost time for me to feed again... Hmm... You’re nervous.”

“The last time this happened, I thought I was going to die.” Barry gave a shaky laugh. “My nervousness seems justified.”

“I can wait at least another fortnight if you really are not ready for this.”

“N-no. I want to do it now, before I lose my nerve.”

“If you are sure of this...”

“Yes.”

The vampire’s head tilted slightly. “You need not fear this, Barry. The feeding will only hurt for a second and won’t be fatal. I have done this for millennia, and I know how much blood I can take. In fact, I will be taking less than I did before.”

Barry shivered and felt his nerves intensify. A single hand landed on his face this time. Barry flinched reactively, but stopped himself. The touch was gentle, slow, applying a light pressure.

“Relax,” whispered the professor.

He grabbed Barry, pulling him close, body against body, wrapping his arms around him. Barry’s eyes widened. The vampire’s scent was just as good, just as comforting as he remembered. Though the arms had strength that could crush him in an instant, they were warm, kind, soothing. Barry felt his heart rate slowing, felt his muscles losing tension. He didn’t pull out of the embrace this time.

“That’s it, Barry. You have suffered through much emotional distress recently. You need to stop resisting all forms of comfort when you so clearly need it.”

Barry knew it was an illusion. It was a methodical process for the professor to do this, a necessary ruse to calm him because the professor wanted his blood in a very specific manner. Barry was just a walking dinner to the vampire, one that should Professor Thawne grow tired of would be shredded.
into pieces. He inhaled and looked up, into those eyes.

Why didn’t his heart start pounding again? Why couldn’t he believe his routine thoughts this time?

The vampire’s hands slowly reached up and brushed back the collar of Barry’s nightshirt, exposing his neck, and Barry didn’t miss the excitement that flared in his icy irises. His claws just barely scraped his exposed skin. Barry refused to let himself feel or think of anything in that moment. Mechanically, he tilted his head to better expose his throat, and he shut his eyes. Professor Thawne moved in, placing his lips against his pulse point. Barry inhaled a deep breath of anticipation. He focused on the feeling of the arms still around him, trying to keep himself relaxed.

Professor Thawne opened his mouth and whispered against Barry’s neck, “your scent alone is *addicting.*” He plunged his fangs in. Barry gasped, hands clenching against Professor Thawne’s chest, wadding his shirt into his tight grip. The pain was sharp, but not as much as it’d been on the night the vampire had found him. Professor Thawne gave an appreciative noise, like a hum. He drank slowly this time, like he was savoring it. Barry opened his eyes and focused on the stars above. The pain seemed distant now. He thought about the constellations they’d discussed…about how beautiful they were.

He wasn’t sure how long the feeding went on, but after some time, it occurred to him his thoughts were growing foggy. He was light-headed, vaguely dizzy. *He...he knows how much to take... I’m fine*...

He found himself slumping into the vampire. He shifted just a bit to reposition himself slightly and- *Wha-?* There was something hard pressing against his leg. Confused, he pressed back into it, trying to discern what was happening. He could almost swear there was a grunt in his ear. “I-” Barry gasped out, “I don’t-” The vampire pulled away. Barry almost fell over until he was caught again in the strong embrace. He managed, “I’m feeling faint.”

There was a long pause before he was answered. “I...realize now I should have had you eat at least an hour before I fed,” Professor Thawne muttered, his voice clipped. “...I’ll get you to the kitchen. The apples should suffice for now in helping you recover. Once you no longer feel dizzy, you can eat something more substantial.”

Barry tried to focus on the vampire’s face. He looked different. What was it? Oh. There was a bit of extra color in his pallid skin, giving him a more human appearance. It must’ve been from the fresh blood.

Professor Thawne seized him abruptly and swept him up, right into his arms. He walked toward the manor.

“What’re you-?” Barry complained. He wasn’t so out of it as to not realize how ridiculous this was. He could walk for pity’s sake! He squirmed, trying to get back to the ground.

Professor Thawne brushed his lips just barely over his own. Barry was shocked into stillness. He shut his eyes.

“*Ego te protegam, *” Professor Thawne whispered in his ear. “What did I tell you, Barry? *Relax.*”

Eobard leaned back in his bed, enjoying the soft material against his bare skin, feeling full and lazy. He let out a tight sigh. His skin was tingling. He hadn’t planned for the feeding at all. It had happened because of a purely spontaneous decision on Barry’s part. But he would be lying if he said he hadn’t been completely excited by the mere *idea* of it as soon as Barry had offered.
The spark of Barry’s lust lingered in his taste buds this time, tingling differently from the flavor of afterglow. That blood had filled him, given him a high. It was heady enough drinking any blood, but drinking such enticing blood filled with lust-

It had been somewhat difficult getting the mortal to the kitchen when Eobard’s own arousal was so strong. A bit awkward, too, but fortunately Barry seemed too stupefied to even properly notice. He’d left Barry alone as soon as the man began to nibble on an apple. Maybe he had taken too much blood. He couldn’t explain why his body was having this level of reaction. The first time he’d fed hadn’t left him feeling so desperate for this kind of pleasure.

Either way, he now had no doubt of Barry’s desire for him, but men had been taught that it was wrong to want that for the last thousand years, if not more; it was so deeply ingrained in them. Eobard didn’t know if that would ever change. Regardless, Barry would never want to accept it, despite how perfectly normal it was. The fool would probably continue to pretend that wasn’t what he was feeling for the rest of his short, admittedly pathetic life.

And yet… Barry was so gorgeous … Especially now that he was clean and looking healthier every day.

Eobard knew it wasn’t a line of thought he should be indulging, but he also knew he’d so enjoy the feeling of himself buried deep inside of Barry… The thought alone was enough to make him hard again. He couldn’t relax at all. He knew he had to ease off this tension somehow. This was almost ludicrous. He closed his eyes and took himself in hand. It’d been awhile since he’d resorted to this.

Barry fluttered his eyelids up at him, his eyes seeming to sparkle in the moonlight. He ground his leg into Eobard’s groin, and Eobard swallowed the gasp forming in his throat.

“You want to put that in me?” Barry purred salaciously, pressing his warm body into Eobard’s with seemingly all of his strength. His eyes were blazing now with want. Eobard realized the mortal was hard too, and he pressed that hardness against Eobard’s own arousal.

“It’s about time you asked,” Eobard growled, devouring the offered lips until Barry was groaning against him.

Eobard’s other hand trailed up his abdomen and chest to the sire mark on his neck. He massaged it, groaning briefly. The flush in his face felt even hotter now, his heart was racing, and his breathing was irregular.

Barry climbed on top of Eobard and sat upon his erection, and Eobard got to feel him in the way he so dearly wanted. Barry moved hard, staring determinedly into Eobard’s eyes. He looked like an emperor like this, powerful and in control. He held tight to Eobard’s shoulders, and his breath came out in ragged gasps as sweat raced over his bare torso. Little, adorable moans left his lips periodically.

Eobard didn’t want this to ever stop.

He let Barry have the control until he felt the mortal slowing from sheer exhaustion.

Almost there...

Eobard grabbed Barry and moved his tight body for him, arching up to drive deeper into the man. Barry came with a helpless sound, and Eobard flipped them over while Barry was still coming, driving into him harder and harder with forceful thrusts-

Eobard finished with a silent moan.
That was very good, he reflected in the silence that followed. Fantasies couldn’t replace actual *complexus*, but it certainly was worth it. He had no better way to release the tension of his desire. He decided he would sleep for awhile after cleaning up. By the time he awoke, his mind would be clear again.

Chapter End Notes

Aaaaagh! Barry is finally starting to make some headway through the angst mess of his life! Even if he is just going the "I can tough this out alone" route...which, is not what he really wants, but what else is an internalized homophobe gonna do?

¯\_(ツ)_/¯

Also, I figured this would be a good chapter for some Latin. I like it because it adds to that mystical (and also eventually romantic) feel I'm going for, so here are the translations (btw, some of these probably aren't all that accurate. So hard to find a good source for Latin without having to learn the entire language first and I don't have time for that though it'd be kind of cool if I did. I did the best I could, however.) -

*Vos aeternum vivet* - You will live forever. (Or as Eo so romantically put it "You will live for an eternity")

*Meus amor* - my love

*Ego te Protegam* - I will protect you

*Complexus* - (okay, literally, this one means any of these following words: embrace, enfolding, hug, grasp, connection, but in my mind it's a vampire slang term for sex.)
Barry hummed to himself as he stepped into the kitchen. He saw Professor Thawne at the sink, sleeves rolled up, scrubbing on the morning’s dishes. Occasionally he had Barry do this task, but it seemed he had decided to take it upon himself for today. Barry watched his arms, which he noted were quite muscular.

Barry shook his head, drawing his gaze away. He was about to go to the apple basket for one of the delicious red fruits when Professor Thawne stiffened so abruptly, it caught his attention. The professor's gaze turned to Barry. "What are you carrying?" He practically spat. His voice was sharp - a harsh noise in the mostly silent kitchen. Barry almost cringed. He hadn't heard it that angry in some time.

Barry inwardly flailed with confusion. On the outside, he was frozen. "W-what?" he managed.

Professor Thawne approached him, dishes all but forgotten now, and Barry fought the urge to back away. He stopped himself. He hadn't done any wrong. He didn't need to run. "Why would you bring a weapon in here?" the professor demanded to know.

Barry frowned, shocked. "I don't have a-"

"Don't play innocent, Barry Allen, I am no fool," Professor Thawne reached for him and Barry flinched. The powerful hand grasped the front of his shirt and held him in place. The tense fingers dampened that portion of Barry's clothes, still wet from being in the sink just moments prior. The look on the vampire’s face alone was enough to make Barry want to run as fast and as far as he could, and no amount of reassuring himself that he hadn't done anything wrong would change that.

Professor Thawne hissed, "planning to betray me now? Did you think I had let my guard down because it's been a few weeks? Do you realize how short of time you've actually been here in my perspective?"

"No- I- please. I really don't understand." Was the vampire finally done with him? Had he finally snapped after all this time and Barry just happened to be here to experience it?

The vampire's gaze bore into him. Barry gulped, hoping the vampire's lie-detecting capabilities wouldn't fail this time, that he would realize the truth. Barry tried to not think how easy it would be for the immortal to end his life. Just a split second was all that would be needed, and the claws would already be retracted. Barry wouldn't have time to even try to resist.

Finally, Professor Thawne seemed to hesitate. "You are carrying silver, Barry. What am I supposed to assume?"

"What? I am-?"

Silence pressed in for a few moments. The professor didn't relent, just stared at him with an almost incredulous expression, as if he couldn’t decide whether Barry was foolish enough to try and deceive him or if Barry was truly clueless to what was on his person.

"Oh... I am." Barry realized. He almost laughed with relief, but it died out at the continued anger being pointed at him. "It's uh- not a weapon, um..." His hand reached into his pocket and he pulled
out his mother's silver wedding band.

Professor Thawne glared at it like it had personally wronged him. "Why are you carrying that thing around?" He almost spat.

"I... It's personal," Barry explained. "I didn't think about it being silver."

The vampire's tone barely changed. "Well now that you have, you will dispose of it."

"What?" Barry clenched the ring into his fist. "No! This was given to my mother by my father! This was all he could afford, but that didn't matter, because it proves how much he loved her! I won't just throw it away! I barely have anything to remind me of them as it is!"

"I won't let you bear a potential weapon against me!"

"It's not a weapon. What would I even do with it?"

"All silver is a potential weapon. Even that meager amount makes me feel weaker."

"Well, I'm not throwing it away!" Barry insisted. "I'd rather leave and return to that hellhole house than lose this!"

There was another tense pause.

Barry sighed, an idea occurring to him. "What if I keep it in my room? I won't carry it around, and it won't bother you."

The vampire shook his head. "Not good enough. It'll still affect me if I enter your room."

"Hmph. Maybe if you didn't barge into my room without warning or permission..."

"Irrelevant. It'll be more convenient for future feedings to take place in your room, and sometimes I just need to address you. I should be able to do that much without seeing or feeling the presence of that sickening metal." The vampire exhaled and released his iron grip on Barry. Barry, for some reason, was very aware of the damp patch of cloth against his chest. "Hmmm... If you are so adamantly on keeping it... I do have some metal boxes in the cellar by the fledgeling vampire cell that are designed to safely contain silver materials... You can take one and keep this thing in your room, if you must. It'll keep it from weakening me whenever I am near it."

Barry nodded. "Okay..." He looked away.

"Well? What are you waiting for?"

"You didn't trust me," Barry said, not sure why he felt a twinge inside of him as the words left his mouth. It's not like he should expect any different. "You thought I would actually get a weapon and try to use it against you..."

The professor's lips flattened in disapproval. "You wanted me brought to justice when I first found you... You would honestly say that is still not the case?"

“I... Well...” Barry looked away. A week or so ago, he would have had to admit a certain yes to such a question. Now, the answer felt more complicated. He wasn't sure he liked the thought.

"I thought so," the vampire said, albeit coldly. "Now go put that thing away, or I will dispose of it myself, with or without your blessing." He barely finished his words before Barry left the kitchen at a brisk walk.
Professor Thawne had truly been wary of him, he thought. It was silly. He was a fragile mortal to him, but the minute the vampire had sensed silver, all comfort and composure had fallen away. A moment of vulnerability had been exposed - a moment where the professor felt fear. Maybe not fear in a traditional sense, but alarm at realizing he was so near something capable of hurting him.

Barry remembered how the vampire had told him his sire had died, by a silver stake in the heart. It was no wonder why he had reacted in that manner.

Not that it was likely Barry could ever get the best of him, even with silver.

Still, he indulged the idea of it for a moment, in the privacy of his mind. Indulged the thought of somehow springing a trap and subduing the professor. Indulged the thought of bringing him in for justice, of proving everyone that had laughed in his face wrong. Indulged the thought of being hailed a hero that no one would forget in a hurry.

However, Professor Thawne seemed to have several vampire allies. If he was brought to justice, Barry could only imagine that these other vampires would retaliate once the secret was out their kind were indeed real and not just tall tales told to frighten children. With no hunters in the area, what would civilians do? Barry wasn't even sure how many vampires existed nearby, and how strong they all truly were. It was safe to say he had yet to witness even a fraction of what they were capable of.

The thought made him shudder.

Was there no solution to the problem of these blood-drinking murderers that didn't involve even more carnage?

Barry knew he'd have to contemplate this more thoroughly later. For now, he had to focus on securing the ring in one of those boxes. Surely something would make itself obvious eventually. If not, he would just have to be content with what little he could do. At the moment, that meant keeping Professor Thawne from killing any more civilians by satiating him with his own blood.

Barry spent a lot of time outside the next few weeks. The days had gotten shorter and colder since he'd first arrived. The apple trees in the orchard were almost bare of fruit and the leaves were changing to various hues of red, gold and brown. He'd taken it upon himself to help feed the family of cats. He noticed there were two other adult cats that hung around besides the mother. One was a tom, and he didn't care much for Barry’s presence, usually avoiding him or hissing when Barry got too close. However, the two females had grown accustomed to him and now purred when he approached. The kittens liked to climb his pant legs, and he played with them. They also took great joy in leaping about in the crunchy dead foliage of falling leaves and batting the dried out foliage around.

Barry decided to name the family of felines. Somnia for the mother. For the other female cat, he named her Iris, a sad smile on his face when the word left his lips. The litter contained a golden tabby male, a black kitten with golden eyes, and a reddish-brown female with especially fluffy fur. He'd named them Poot, Sweetie, and Nora respectively. The antisocial tom he started referring to as Damien, which gave him mild amusement.

Over time, Barry was beginning to notice that Professor Thawne was growing more conscious of his space, seeming to make an effort not to invade it as much as he used to. In fact, the vampire seemed to be giving him an unusually wide berth when compared to before. It was strangely refreshing...and yet, Barry couldn't help but feel that something in the vampire’s demeanor had changed slightly, and it unnerved him, something that was also responsible for this new respect for his personal space.
He was probably just imagining it.

Barry had also been researching more on vampires themselves, trying to understand them better. It was still a challenge to comprehend anything beyond anatomy. Their culture - or counterculture, as many authors on the subject liked to refer to it - seemed to be completely opposite from mortal's, though the one thing that did make sense to Barry was that they did appear to value a certain kind of morality amongst themselves. Murder amongst vampires was a serious crime.

*Guess that generosity doesn't extend to mortals,* he reflected.

Everything else left him frowning with disgust or confusion, sometimes even chuckling with disbelief because there *was no way that particular fact was true*; the author, for some reason, was spinning falsehoods to support their silly theories.

So Barry decided he needed some real answers from an immortal himself. How else was he to ever make sense of vampires or even those books?

He went directly to Professor Thawne's office and knocked.

"Come on in, Barry," replied the professor's muffled voice through the door.

"I was doing some research in the library," Barry announced when he strolled in. "And I was hoping you could help me with some questions I had."

"I will answer as well as I can." Professor Thawne put his chin in his hands, eyeing Barry in an odd way. He looked somewhat distracted, but not unfocused. It was an odd look, but Barry was sure he was listening.

"I've been trying to understand your culture a bit better," Barry admitted.

"Mmmh?"

"And...um..." For some reason, Barry's neck grew warm. He rubbed it nonchalantly. "Anyway, I read that vampires feel murder is the worst crime amongst your kind? If you really value life, then why is it so excusable to murder non-vampires?"

Professor Thawne's brows raised. "Surely you don’t need me to tell you why. It is not so hard to understand. When death is not necessarily an inevitability, the loss of a life is a far bigger waste. A human is going to die, one day, one way or another. But a vampire has a chance of never dying, of living to the end of time... It doesn't help that our numbers are lower than they've been in a long time. Anyone who suffers another crime will have an eternity to recover if needed, but to die? There is no recovery from death, as you well know...."

Barry chewed the inside of his cheek. "Isn't that a bit...callous, to devalue a life because it'll die sooner?"

"Vampires need blood... I suppose what I'm trying to say, Barry, is there is no good way to get the blood that we need...and so we must sacrifice for our own survival. Not that there isn’t joy in it for those of us who allow ourselves to feel it. While you may find that sick, it is only natural. Consider. A tiger enjoys chasing the sow through the forest before the kill. It is how a predator is compelled by it's biology to survive."

Barry brooded on that for a few minutes. "I suppose...you're right. There isn't an easy answer to a vampire's need for blood, is there? There are animals, but human blood is arguably healthiest for your kind... It would be unrealistic to ask an entire population to subsist on low quality food."
The professor nodded. “I am glad that you are starting to see us as a people instead of demons, Barry.”

Barry shrugged. "I realize now that if I believe you are demons...then I have to believe in something that defies science. And so I don’t. In any case, back to the subject of blood. Really, the best possible solution to that problem I can imagine would be to have more humans willing to give their blood, like me. There's not many vampires, and relatively speaking, it wouldn't take much."

"But most people call us demons and monsters, like you once did. They don’t care for science, and would rather believe fairy tales… Our arrangement was very unlikely, and you weren’t even keen on it in the beginning... Besides, I haven't seen even one century where mortal society accepted our own. It would require mortals willing to abandon their own society to join ours, all without feeling envious of our immortality... Once upon a time, we thought we could cooperate with humans to get what we needed - thus we had what you've come to know as pets, blood servants. Sadly, that only led the hunters to us more quickly. They could infiltrate the ranks of blood servants to get close to us, to murder us in our sleep if they wished. Also, humans are quite fragile in comparison. It could be a challenge to the average vampire to keep them healthy and whole. Your kind can die in a matter of hours of eating the wrong thing... Willing humans are not a reliable source of food."

Barry nodded sadly. “I wish there was a way to avoid bloodshed over this.”

“Always so altruistic, Mr. Allen. However, some things can’t be settled nicely over wine and dinner, I’m afraid.”

Barry sighed. “So it seems.”

After a moment, Professor Thawne leaned back. “Is that all?”

Barry shook his head, but then he chuckled a bit. “Actually, no.”

"What? Something amuses you?"

"I've found a lot of information in your books...but I have to wonder, isn’t some of it a little...inaccurate? Some of it seems to be written by...those with questionable mental stability."

"What makes you say that?"

"Well, a couple of your books claimed that vampires will...thank or apologize to each other with sodomy. That's silly. I can see maybe a few doing such, but the entire culture?"

Professor Thawne let out a chuckle of his own. "Counterculture, Mr. Allen. Though admittedly it's more nuanced than that."

"I take that as a no?" Barry asked, starting to feel a little relieved.

"Let me tell you a little story." Professor Thawne continued like he hadn't heard. "There’s one vampire who is... Shall I say he should never have been turned into a vampire in the first place? He has none of the qualities a vampire needs...similar to you, but worse, if you can imagine that. This vampire’s name is Raymond, and I’d be a little shocked if he wasn’t dead by now. Then again, he somehow manages to survive when you least expect it... See, he refuses to drink human blood. He will only drink animal blood, but imagine this- he won’t even kill the animals he feeds on. He just drinks what little he can and he’s always on the verge of starvation. I sometimes wonder if he just derives pleasure from being half dead all the time..."

"What is the point of this story again?" Barry asked, feeling uncomfortable.
"Just listen. Anyway, this fool shows up at my door one time - I don’t remember the reason why now. This was a couple decades ago. He showed up hungry, of course, and turns down my offer of hunting legitimate blood for him. So, I tell him if he wants to thank me, I could possibly get my hands on a live deer. He agreed. Rather enthusiastically I might add.

"Long story short, capturing a live deer without killing it is a miserable task, but I managed to do it. He feeds, and as expected, he let’s it live. He then asks if I really do want a thank you - he’s considerate like that - and I told him yes, of course, I didn’t go through all that trouble because I’m a nice person - which I’m not. So he says he’s going to clean up and sleep for awhile first, which I knew was reasonable. At this point, he’s already given too many informal thank you’s."

Barry stared at him, confused but listening.

Professor Thawne chuckled. "Well, eventually, after he's cleaned up and rested, he meets me in my room and starts kissing me. He was better than I expected. He must’ve done it a lot."

"What," Barry said dumbly.

"He was a lot more assertive than I expected, and when I say this to him, he tells me that’s what happens when your life goes to absolute hell - you change - but that’s an absolute bore so I tell him to stop talking. He starts taking my clothes off. He reaches down and-"

"What the hell!!" Barry all but yelled, stomach twisting into a knot, face burning. "Why are you telling me this!?"

"You asked if vampires committed sodomy as a form of thank you. I am answering the question."

"Is this a joke?" Barry demanded. “Another one of your terrible attempts at humor?"

"No. I am quite serious."

"Then I should think a simple yes or no would have sufficed! Why would you tell me a story with all the disgusting, unnecessary details."

"You seemed to be having trouble wrapping your head around the concept. I thought the personal story would get the point across."

"Why would anyone want that, though!?" Barry snarled. "I don’t see the point-

"We aren’t your kind." Professor Thawne leaned forward, hands on the desk, claws flexed out in agitation. "The point Barry, is that vampires look out for each other. The point is, we don’t have the same inhibitions. The point is that when you live for hundreds or thousands of years, things that bothered you before just seem fucking silly!"

Barry huffed, throwing his hands up. "Why sodomy though?!!"

"Vampires are created through acts of intimacy. It takes a special bond to turn one successfully." The professor frowned. "Well, usually. That's not always the case...I would say at least eighty to ninety percent of vampires are turned this way. For that majority, this has lead to a tradition of continued intimacy amongst vampires. It strengthens bonds, builds trusts, weakens the anger behind perceived flaws and arguments. When you can...let it all go like that, as a vampire, you have truly embraced eternity."

"That’s the biggest load of nonsense I think I’ve ever heard."
"Yes, well, if you are so against the notion of two men being together, why do you keep asking about it and then getting angry when I tell you?"

"I can’t help my curiosity! And I get angry when you go into pointless, disturbing detail! All I wanted was a yes or no on whether it was used as a form of apology or appreciation! Is it too much to ask for some basic politeness and decency when answering my questions?"

"That’s ludicrous. You are asking for yes or no answers on a subject you are researching to understand. Honestly, Mr. Allen, do you even think your words through before speaking them? Or are you just trying to hide behind excuses so you may continue to be angry over something insignificant?"

"I don’t care what you think! It’s disgusting and I don’t want to hear it!"

"One set of beliefs deemed it disgusting long ago!" Professor Thawne snarled. He stood up so quickly, Barry winced when the contents of the desk rattled ominously. "Those beliefs dictated what was right or wrong for no other reason than to create a semblance of order! It did not work, though, because you mortals still suffer and die for useless causes! If you would only open your eyes, your ears, your mind, you would see that for what it is!" Professor Thawne shook his head in the following silence. He turned away. "Why do I let myself forget that you are merely a mortal. Fleeting. You’ll die before your mind will let you think any different.” He sighed. "I apologize, Barry." he glanced back. "I suppose I foolishly expected there was a possibility that you might understand."

Barry seethed at those words. He announced, sudden vengefulness growing, “You know what? I have a story about sodomy, too."

Professor Thawne’s eyes narrowed, looking suspicious, but he said nothing.

Barry cleared his throat. "Several years ago, there was a man who lived near my family’s home. He was a farmer who owned some cows, chickens, goats. He shared eggs and milk with my family occasionally. Sometimes I’d help him with the farm work if he needed it, and my mom would invite him over for dinner on the weekends. He was such a kind man, generous and not afraid to step up and help where it was need... I looked up to him...admired him... I wanted to be like him... Then, out of nowhere, rumors got around that he had committed sodomy with another man. He was my friend. I didn’t believe it for a second... But I had to know if it was true... I went to talk to him, but...others got to him first. They...they lynched him, right before my eyes, they never even gave him a chance to defend himself..." Barry’s throat tightened. "And that’s what that looks like in my world. A good friend kicking for air, neck stretched, eyes bulging, dangling from a noose."

Professor Thawne’s expression softened.

Barry exhaled, bowing his head and rubbing his eyes. The memory of that day had haunted him for so long. He’d had nightmares of it for months. It had taken a long time to put it out of mind, but he didn’t expect it to hurt so much recounting it to the professor.

Professor Thawne said, "I am sorry for what happened, Barry, to your friend. Still, you call my kind murderers, but not your own when they literally string someone up from a tree just for deviating from the norm. Probably without any real proof he had."

Barry was at a loss on how to respond. The professor did have a point. He met the vampire’s keen gaze.

"This is hurting you..." Professor Thawne looked thoughtful for a minute. "Actually Barry, there is a
collection amongst my books you might find interesting."

"More sodomy?"

Professor Thawne ignored his question. "Sappho. I have some poetry by her. You should read it. I think you would find it...more relatable than some of my other tomes you've tried reading. Though she was neither a vampire nor apart of our culture, she still deviated from societal normality."

The name was actually vaguely familiar, though Barry didn't quite remember why. "We'll see." He sighed. "I... Thanks, for the information," he said bluntly. He turned and left the room without another word.

---

Barry was alone in the library later that night when he first found the collection of Sappho’s poetry stored in the special case protected by doors. There wasn't even much there. A few pages of small poems neatly stacked together. As usual, they were written in Professor Thawne's strong, flowing penmanship, though there were no originals. The professor must’ve copied these from another source he didn’t own. The collection was marked simply as Fragments of Sappho. A part of Barry wanted to ignore it - not wanting to read anything that might remind him of sodomy. However, his curiosity was too great.

Besides, it wouldn’t take that long to get through the small amount here.

Barry started reading.

After a few passages, he paused. Women who loved other women. The concept hadn’t even occurred to him until he’d met Sara. And the way this author presented her feelings... Well, Barry could understand why. It was very similar to how he’d felt about Iris.

A small excerpt stood out to him.

*Words that cannot be said are wept.*

A strong sense of longing and sorrow swamped him. He put the collection back on the shelf. He sat on the floor, back against that same shelf, and struggled with emotions buried in his chest.

Why should Professor Thawne want him to read this?

Barry didn’t know what to think, and he wished he understood where the feelings of frustration and misery were coming from. This no longer seemed to be about knowing vampire culture. This felt like something far different. There was something he was seeking, he felt. Something in all this research that would put his heart at ease, that would make the pain worth it.

Something personal.

Shutting down those thoughts, he stood and exited the library. So, yes, it was fascinating, Sappho’s works. They were relatable, though a bit emotional. He decided he would give up on trying to understand that part of vampire culture, and just leave it be. He didn’t have to understand *everything*, he told himself. What vampires did in private didn’t affect him, after all. In fact, he couldn't care less, he told himself.

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Chapter End Notes
Yup. I made vampires hella gay. ฅ(ヾ)ฅ And yes, I am also aware that this is self-indulgent, but that's what fanfic is for, so...
Anyway, sorry there wasn't much going on this chapter besides a whole lot of dialogue. Next chapter is going to be more...interesting.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He could hear *them* chasing him.

Barry’s heart raced, blood pounding in his ears. His breath was short and scratched at his dry throat. His arms and legs felt heavy. He raced as quickly as he could, dodging through brush that caught at him and around tree limbs that jutted into his path, but it felt like he was barely running. The world was sluggish, like sludge surrounding him, holding him back, and every step was more effort than the last. He was running blind through the woods, lost and unsure of where he was going. All he knew was he had to get away from *them*.

He could hear them gaining on him.

His heart summersaulted and he put every last effort into a leap over a small gully. Something struck him hard. He was thrown off balance, landing harshly on rough ground. Before he could move, they were upon him like a pack of wolves on a deer.

"No!" he yelled. Two sets of unforgiving hands grabbed his arms, hauling him to his feet. "No-Stop! I didn’t do that-! It wasn’t me-!"

"Shut up, you disgusting freak!" snarled a vicious voice as his hands were yanked behind his back. Rope was drawn around his wrists, burning his skin as they tightened it.

A second voice added, "yes, you’ll be hanged! I’ll see to it personally!"

The forest seemed to fade away, and an expansive hill covered in green grasses replaced it. A chillingly familiar house set at the top. How? This house had belonged to his friend- the friend that’d been lynched for-

Barry struggled against the ones holding him, terrified beyond reason. There was a crowd around him now, seeming to have appeared out of nowhere, all of its members yelling obscenities while red faced and angry. Barry wanted to scream, but when he opened his mouth, he found he suddenly had no voice. He was being smothered, and he tried to gulp in air, to no avail. He pushed in another effort to free himself, but the iron grip had him, and with the crowd around him, there was no escape.

He was dragged to a lone tree not far away, and he spotted a rope hanging from it, a noose on the end. It swayed ominously in the wind.

"No!" He found is voice. "Please stop! I didn’t do anything wrong! I swear to-"

"Shut up, sinner!!"

"You shouldn’t have committed sodomy, you fucking creep!"

"I- I didn’t!"

The pressure of the rope was around his neck, being tightened, and the sneering face belonging to a cruel man was glaring right at him. "You will die for all that is wrong with you!" He hissed, spittle flying. He brandished a cross that was hanging from his neck. “Which is a lot! You think it’s just sodomistic thoughts? *Everything* is wrong with you, you vile monster!”
Barry cringed. His begging turned into incoherent babbling. The group of men grabbed the other end of the rope. Barry slammed his eyes shut.

This was it.

He was going to die.

There was a lull in the loud shouting. When nothing happened, Barry slowly cracked his eyelids open, listening to confused murmurs. He saw nothing until his eyes just managed to track a blur of movement on the edge of his vision. The rope around his neck split, instantly relieving the uncomfortable pressure on his throat as it went slack. The men holding the other end staggered. Barry realized his arms were also free. He instantly shoved the noose off his shoulders and flung it away from him, dropping to a crouch in instinctive defense, arms shielding his body.

Without warning, the world descended into chaos. Two of the crowd collapsed to the ground, spilling blood from gaping wounds in their necks. Barry didn’t have time to process it before more joined them, then more and more, bodies toppling or flying this way and that. Blood soared everywhere. It spattered across the grass, the tree, the unmoving bodies, and Barry’s clothes. Barry looked down to find blood on his hands; they were soaked in it. His eyes darted back up, and he found himself staring into the eyes of the same face that’d been sneering at him before. Except the man wasn’t sneering now. He was gaping blankly, gurgling on blood. He dropped like a sack of rocks.

Barry sucked in a breath of air and tried to wipe his hands on his clothes, but the blood wouldn’t come off. There was too much-

A curse brought his attention back to what had once been the crowd of yelling, vicious men. Only one of them remained standing. The man was fleeing - or trying to - but the blur stopped him in his tracks.

"And where do you think you are running to?" Asked the blur in a dark tone.

The man howled in alarm, but Barry felt relieved. He would’ve recognized that voice practically anywhere. Professor Thawne.

"I’m going to kill you," the vampire told the man, voice icy. His form was now so distinct, no longer a blur, clothes dark crimson, eyes bright and burning, skin pale as snow. He was covered in the blood of his most recent victims. Lips pulled into a grin that revealed his deadly fangs.

"Wh-what-? D-demon?! You’re in league with a demon?!!" The man yelled over his shoulder at Barry, as if his most pressing concern wasn’t right in front of him. He gripped at a large cross hanging around his neck. "But I am protected! I will not be harmed by it! Y-you will b-burn in hell for this, you si-

There was a loud crack, and his head tilted back - unnaturally far. The man’s body collapsed to the ground in an unceremonious heap. Professor Thawne kicked it aside for good measure. He looked up at Barry, eyes practically glowing. For all intents and purposes, he sure did look like a demon, dangerous and haunting.

Barry’s voice failed him again.

Professor Thawne approached Barry, and Barry adverted his gaze. "My, my," the vampire murmured when he reached him, "look at all the trouble you put me through." His hand reached out and stroked over Barry’s jaw.
"I'm sorry, Professor- I didn't mean to-"

"Shhhh..." the vampire shushed him. "Oh, I know… Still, you really should make all this fuss worth my while, don’t you think?" It didn’t really sound like a question. At least, not one that needed an answer. “On your knees." Not waiting for compliance, Professor Thawne pulled Barry out of his uncomfortable crouch into the desired position. Barry let him. "That’s it, Barry," Professor Thawne said in a soothing tone, "that's it." He tugged Barry’s head to his thigh so that Barry’s cheek rested against it. His hands stroked through Barry’s hair in soothing circles. “You’re safe now.” Barry closed his eyes, taking deep breaths, focusing on the warmth of contact. He was safe, and he would always be as long as he was with the vampire.

Barry raised his hands up, gripping Professor Thawne’s thighs. His right hand traveled down, sliding over the slight bulge on the professor's groin. “I want you,” Barry said.

The vampire let out a soft growl, his hands moving from Barry’s hair to his own pants, pushing Barry's hand away and quickly exposing himself. “Then show me,” he demanded. "Open your mouth."

Barry did, not even hesitating, giving himself completely to the vampire as he knelt there in the blood-soaked grass at his feet.

The professor pushed his bare cock into his mouth, sliding in deep. Barry felt a little confused there was no pain from the sudden intrusion of the thick, hard erection in his mouth, but there was no time to think, and he didn't care. All he cared about was this feeling. Professor Thawne pulled back and thrust forward again and again, repeating the action with fluid rolls of his strong hips. A hand was tangled in Barry’s hair, the other on his neck, and the vampire had complete control of him.

Professor Thawne gave a final, solid thrust, finishing in Barry’s throat. He pulled out and yanked Barry up, pushing him back against the tree, kissing his lips hard as if to taste himself there. He spread Barry’s legs with his knee between them, growling against his ear, "no one is ever going to take you from me, Barry Allen. Ego te protagem."

Barry shivered. He met the intense gaze on him, and it burned straight into his soul. Nothing else could compare to this, this feeling of being wanted- no, needed. And he was more than willing to let the vampire have him.

The vampire kissed along his neck, and then slid down his body, never breaking eye contact. He pulled down Barry's pants, grabbing his stiff length. He began to suck on Barry with gentle tugs of his lips, and Barry moaned in the pleasure that built too quickly, his weight slumping against the tree. He watched Professor Thawne, destroyed but mesmerized. The professor took him into his mouth and sucked viciously, sliding back and forth-

Barry felt like someone was shaking him roughly, and he wondered who could be doing it. The vampire wasn’t in front him anymore. Where did he go? His pants weren’t down. The blood soaked field was gone. It was simply dark. He wasn't leaning on a tree. Instead, he was lying on his back on something soft. He dragged his eyes open, trying to make out details in the lack of light. He was shook again, and he groaned, stirring.

"Barry!"

Barry looked up, blinking right at...at Professor Thawne? "Wh-what-?"

"Are you alright?"
"I... I'm alright..." Barry muttered and rubbed at his eyes. He closed them again. "Are you an incubus?" He murmured to the vampire, pushing his face into the soft pillow beside him.

"What?"

"An incubus?" Barry sighed. "You know...? You know..."

"I thought we were past the whole demon thing, Barry Allen. Regardless, incubus describes a creature who takes on a top role, just as a succubus would describe one who prefers bottom. So, even if I were a demon of ardor - and I have no clue what gave you such an idea - I believe 'concubus' would be a more appropriate term. I like to switch things up."

"Conc...conka-what-?" Barry rolled over, forcing his eyes open. "...Wait, what...what are you talking about?" Barry asked, jolting into a sitting position as it struck him - heavens, he'd just been woken up by Professor Thawne! What was going on? This had never happened before.

The vampire stared at him. "Do you remember anything you just said before now?"

"I was talking?" Barry asked, appalled.

"Yes. You were."

"Oh... What did I say?"

"Nothing coherent," the vampire snorted.

Barry felt his face burn slightly. "Oh, okay... W-what are you doing in my room so late? Is something wrong?"

"Firstly, I apologize for not knocking-" wow, the vampire was apologizing for that? Barry hadn't known Professor Thawne could realize his own terrible manners! "And secondly, I came to check on you."

"Oh? Um... Why?"

"I heard you. You sounded as if you were in pain."

Barry rubbed his eyes, trying to remember the dream he'd just been having. He remembered there was blood. "It must've been a nightmare," he said with a shrug. "Couldn't you have figured that much on your own?"

"I was afraid someone might have broken into the house and harmed you."

"Are you serious?" Barry blurted. "I mean... Does that happen a lot? People breaking into the house?"

"No. However, it has happened a few times over the centuries. Thieves or hunters... Either way, even if it was unlikely, I had to make sure. No one will take you away from me, Barry Allen."

Barry abruptly shivered and broke eye contact. The words felt like an echo from some promise made long ago. It was a strange feeling that didn’t quite make sense. Had Professor Thawne said them before? He couldn’t remember. "Well...uh, thanks, for...checking in. I’m fine, though."

There was a small pause, one in which Professor Thawne idly noted, "ah, I see you put that ring in one of the metal boxes as I asked. I appreciate that."
"Yeah, it wasn’t a problem." Barry looked up. "Does that mean you aren’t angry at me anymore?"

Professor Thawne briefly touched his shoulder, a touch that threatened to send tremors down his body from how light it was. "Angry? Whatever for?" The professor asked, brows furrowed.

Barry swallowed, trying to calm his sudden nerves. "It just seemed like, after the incident with the ring, you..." He tried to find the words for his thoughts, "...um...you didn’t seem to...want to...be in the same room with me much anymore. I mean, not like...you...used...to..."

Professor Thawne’s brows raised. "Is that how it seemed? I...” He trailed off, a strange look passing over his face. "No, I was not angry. At least, not for that long. Admittedly, I was at first. But you have to understand that silver has brought me much sorrow over the centuries. When I got upset, it wasn’t personal... Either way, it wasn’t my intention to avoid you... At least, not because of that. I was - am - simply making an effort to...not be as overbearing."

Barry nodded, once again feeling that strange sense of longing in his chest he didn’t understand. "I understand."

The professor seemed to relax, which was odd because Barry hadn’t realized he’d been tense before.

It was precisely that moment when Barry became acutely aware of an issue. His undergarments beneath the nightshirt he wore were sticky wet, warm, and uncomfortable. He felt his skin heat up and he looked at the wall, trying to keep a stoic face until he could clean up his mess. Embarrassing.

Professor Thawne spoke again, "I hope this nightmare wasn’t very distressing for you... If you can, you should probably try to get some more rest. Dawn is not yet here...” He seemed to consider for a few moments, then said, “if you want, I could stay with you until you fall back to slee-"

"I’m fine, really!" Barry insisted, meeting his gaze. "I don’t even remember what the nightmare was about, so it must’ve not been too awful!"

"I understand." The professor seemed to relax, which was odd because Barry hadn’t realized he’d been tense before.

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"I’m fine, really!" Barry insisted, meeting his gaze. "I don’t even remember what the nightmare was about, so it must’ve not been too awful!"

The professor almost looked...disappointed, but that couldn’t be right. He couldn’t possibly have wanted to- "If you’re sure,” he said.

Barry found he wanted to tell him differently, to ask him to stay with him until he fell back to sleep, so he would feel completely safe. But not only was that incredibly selfish, it also made no sense. And he had another problem to take care of, anyway. "Definitely. Thanks, though, for ensuring I was safe. I do appreciate it!"

Professor Thawne pulled his hand away. "I would never let you come to harm..." There was another pause, and the vampire let out a small sigh. "Even though it was surely just a nightmare, I will ensure the house is safe, do not fear. Breakfast will be ready when you awaken."

"Yes. Excellent," Barry replied. "I will try to get more rest."

"Goodnight, then."

"Goodnight."

Professor Thawne turned and walked away. Barry waited a few moments until he was sure the professor was well and truly gone before slipping out from under the covers to take care of his problem. Of course this happened now of all times. Definitely embarrassing. Barry changed his night clothes, throwing the old ones in a hamper. Using the wash basin, he cleaned up with a damp cloth. After putting on fresh clothes, he crawled back into bed.
He didn't go back to sleep right away. Instead, he questioned the reason he’d wanted the vampire to stay with him. Obviously, Professor Thawne's presence made him feel safer. However, Barry didn’t exactly feel like there was any danger, so it shouldn’t have mattered. He figured he just would’ve liked a bit more conversation before falling back to sleep. It wasn’t like he had friends to converse with here. He reflected on another odd thing - that the vampire seemed to be growing to respect him more, giving him space not out of anger, but out of a worry of being overbearing. And also apologizing for not knocking before entering his room? Barry had never expected that would happen.

Wasn’t he still just a mortal to Professor Thawne? Wasn’t his life going to be fleeting compared to his? Why would the vampire go to such lengths over his blood bag?

Maybe he was doing it so that Barry felt even more comfortable in this life, to make his blood even better quality.

Barry couldn’t know for sure, and it seemed like the logical answer. But still, oddly enough, it didn't feel like the right answer.

Barry wondered why he was even bothering to try and understand this. *What he does is a mystery. He’s lived for two thousand years, so of course he’s going to be eccentric. I should just stop worrying about it. After all, I’ll probably never truly understand him, and there’s nothing I can do about that.* He buried himself more thoroughly in the soft bedding, and after a little while, he drifted back to sleep.

*Chapter End Notes*

Just an FYI: the Latin phrase in Barry's dream was the same one Eobard said to him in chapter 8, the one that translated roughly to "I will protect you." ;)

Reflection

Chapter Notes

Yup! I finally updated! \o/
Anyway, I'm tired rn so sorry if this chapter isn't that great. I stayed up all night to finish.
Woo~
Also sorry it took me so long to update. I have not been writing as much as I want to lately. Busy-ness and a lack of motivation being the primary causes of that. :/

Barry…

Eobard stirred in his silken sheets. The image of his human lingered faintly behind his eyelids, hardly surprising him as he came into awareness. He worked into a sitting position and dropped his legs off the bed. He dreamed of Barry far too often lately. He inhaled, exhaled, then stood. He crossed to the window. Pulling back the curtains and blinds, he looked upon cloudy skies outside. It was probably afternoon sometime. He returned to his bed, sitting on the edge as his thoughts immediately went back to Barry Allen.

He thought of that first night. He had loved every drop of Barry’s blood, had become addicted after that first feeding. At the time, he had thought that was the sole reason he had whimsically decided to spare him, to offer him a place at his side as a blood servant. Because why not? There was no use in letting such perfect blood go to waste, and Eobard had somewhat missed having a pet… But now…well, now, that smile… Now, Eobard wanted to pull Barry close, to hear him whisper things like professor in his ear, to place his lips against the mortal’s graceful, smooth neck and listen to him moan in that beautiful voice of his, listen to his musical heartbeat. He wanted to feel his heated, sweat-slicked skin under his hands…

He hadn’t meant for this to happen. Becoming attached to a human was never a good idea. They didn’t live long. Well… it wasn’t attachment, exactly, like what one might feel for friend. It also wasn’t simple, plain lust, what one might feel for a handsome stranger. No.

Eobard was old, not stupid.

He knew exactly what it was he felt; he was utterly and hopelessly smitten. He had forgotten just how strong such feelings could be. He had forgotten how they could destroy judgement.

Eobard inwardly scoffed. Damien Darhk had been dead certain he had spared Barry because the mortal had “a pretty face”. At the time, Eobard had thought the antagonistic man was was simply trying to irritate him. In retrospect, he should have known better. It was now clear he’d been interested in more than blood since that first night. He almost hated that Damien was right, but he couldn’t bring himself to hate what he was feeling for Barry, even if he knew, deep down, it would only bring more sorrow and frustration to his extended life.

While he couldn’t have realistically expected anything more, Eobard had to admit he was only further antagonized because Barry was very adamant on not sharing such feelings. Or admitting that he did. Eobard knew well enough that, in the very least, Barry held lust for him. He’d tasted it in his blood, had seen it in his eyes more than once. He contemplated if it was worth it to try harder to get the idiot to see this. So far, pointing out the man’s strange cognitive dissonance whenever anything
related to “sodomy” was brought up hadn’t been enough.

He almost rolled his eyes. Frustration was an understatement. He half-regretted ever sparing Mr. Allen’s life. Of course things had gotten complicated because of it. He supposed if he put in the effort, he could probably seduce him into his bed. Things like alcohol had a tendency to bring out inner desires and melt away inhibitions. However, he figured it would only be counterproductive. Barry would probably enjoy it in the moment, but after… Well, Eobard had no doubt he would withdraw after that, if not in body, then in heart and mind. Eobard would have trouble finding ease with him, and that combination would crumble with time. Lust wasn’t enough to maintain a bond.

Eobard sighed. He’d be better off finding another vampire willing to fall into bed with him to sate his desires than trying anything in regards to Barry. A shame, but he just had to accept the fact Barry would never be more than just a frustrating source of blood for him.

Pushing Barry from his thoughts, he got up from the bed again, walking over to one of several mirrors in the room. He had to take a moment to admire himself, proud of his power, his looks, his form. With a small smile, he hummed his way over to the dresser. He opened the drawer, contemplating which outfit he should wear for the day. The purple overcoat with the floral patterns? Or the more simple black suit? Or go lighter - just a plain white shirt and waistcoat?

He wondered vaguely, which outfit of his in this entire manor appealed most to Barry’s eyes. He’d probably never know. He sighed again.

“Oh- Jesus!”

Eobard, holding a white shirt, turned to find Barry - of course, as if he’d been summoned by Eobard’s thoughts - in the door, facing away from him. Even from this angle, Eobard could tell his right hand was slapped firmly across his eyes. A smirk crept across his own face. He was suddenly certain that Barry’s favorite outfit for him to wear was no outfit. Even if the man didn’t know that was his favorite.

“What is the matter, Mr. Allen?”

“P-put on some clothes!” Barry yelped, undignified.

“So flustered. Tsk, tsk.” Eobard began pulling on one of the more elaborate outfits, never taking his eyes from the other man. Barry, to his own credit - or maybe discredit - didn’t steal even a single sinful peek. Eobard didn’t know whether to be impressed or disappointed. He wondered how much Barry had seen before he’d turned away. It was ridiculous that a part of Eobard hoped Barry had seen a fair amount. Even more ridiculous how he wanted Barry to see it all.

“I am modest,” Eobard remarked as he passed Barry into the hallway.

“I- yes, er- w-why were you in there? And- dressing?” Barry asked. With a quick look, Eobard noticed his pet’s face was still a little pink. “Your room is upstairs-? It’s almost like you spent the day down here, sleepi-” he cut off. “Wait, were you?”

“Of course I was.” Eobard laughed. “You think the only room I occupy is the one upstairs? My, my, Mr. Allen, that’s not very observant of you. You’ve been here how long? Two months? Three? And you didn’t notice?”

“Well, I know you rest in different places, but… Why would you use more than one room? I would think one should be sufficient.”

“Because I like different styles. I’ve fancied several from different time periods, and you simply can’t
mix different century themes. It’s really not hard to comprehend, Barry.”

“I...uh...okay…”

“Besides, what is the point of having a house this large if you do not intend to utilize all of it’s space?”

“That’s...a fair point…”

“I know.”

Eobard entered the kitchen. He grabbed the matches to start the stove fire, then filled his teapot, sitting it on top.

“Of course, I….um,” Barry started, clearly bothered by something,

“Yes?”

“it’s just… I live here now, too, so… I wish to avoid...further incidents like that one.”

Like that one, echoed in Eobard’s thoughts. He understood that Barry was struggling with himself again, with his feelings. He turned to the younger man, noting the current fidgeting, the increased heart rate. While it had been somewhat amusing before, he suddenly found he just wasn’t quite in the mood to handle Barry’s particular brand of denial today. Why couldn’t the man just let it go? It’s not as if Eobard had pushed his boundaries. If Barry had no intention to acknowledge or act upon his desire, why did he make such a fuss about them?

“No,” he bit out, a bit more harshly than he meant to.

Barry shivered. “N-No-what?”

Eobard forced himself to stifle his agitation. “You wanted to ask if you were going to stumble across me nude often, and the answer is no. I have neglected to show you my other personal spaces, but I will do so later…. If only to avoid you getting all flustered because you can’t handle the fact that people have something called a body beneath their clothing.”

“I- You-” Barry went red again. “You’re such a-a-a prick! Just because where I came from had manners a-and standards- !”

“Did you need something from me, Barry?” Eobard interrupted. He wasn’t about to argue with his pet over this.

Barry frowned at him, displaying his displeasure. “You’re in a bit of a mood today,” he muttered. “Um- but yes,” he said more loudly. “I wanted to ask something- not related to...the...well...” he trailed off.

“And what would that be? Pray tell.”

“I was just going to ask if you ever travel. Well, I assume you’ve traveled a lot in your time, but I guess I mean recently.”

“Perhaps…” Eobard said, looking at a claw on his left hand. It was probably time to file them down a bit. “Why do you ask?”

“I… I got to go to London once, with my dad, when I was younger. And...well, I would really love to go again.”
Barry’s heart was beating just a little faster than usual. He seemed nervous. Eobard couldn’t help but think there was more to this inquiry than what met his ears. However, he decided it wasn’t worth trying to pry out of his stubborn pet. Not right now. “If you wish, I could make arrangements eventually. There are some places I would be interested in showing you. I think you would enjoy this one bakery...” He looked up, meeting a bright gaze.

Barry was nodding. “That’d be great.”

“When do you wish to go?”

Barry shrugged. “I didn’t have a specific time in mind. Just before I get old, preferably.” He laughed shortly.

Eobard offered him a smile of his own. He would find out later what the man was hiding. For now, he just wanted to avoid arguments with him.

The tea kettle started singing its tune, and Eobard pulled it from the stove. He poured his tea into a cup, and took a tentative sip of the hot liquid. He sat it down. “Tea?” He offered Barry.

“No, thanks.” Barry said. “Actually… Well, probably not, but...”

“Yes?”

“I was planning to go hike the woods in awhile. Do you want to come with me and keep me from getting lost?” Barry asked.

Eobard raised an eyebrow. He wondered if Barry had even meant to offer, or if it had sort of slipped out. Either way, he wasn’t going to take it back now.

Eobard grinned. “Yes.”

Barry nodded, then quickly slipped out of the kitchen. A few minutes later, while Eobard was quietly sipping and contemplating, the mortal reappeared.

“Just one more question?”

“Yes?”

“Why was there a bottle labeled olive oil in that room? I couldn’t help but notice… It wasn’t exactly a kitchen...”

“Oh...no reason. No reason at all, Barry. Things always turn up in odd places in this old house.”

“Oh… Alright.”

It seemed Barry had gotten a good look after all.

The trees were golden in hue with variations of red, yellow, and orange - like fire. The air smelled of decaying leaves and damp earth. A biting wind drifted through the woods, rustling the dried up foliage, and Eobard saw Barry puff up his overcoat. His breath clouded in the air and his cheeks and ears had gone red with the cold. He cupped his hands over his flushed lips, blowing hot air into them. As he rubbed his palms together, he commented, “whew, it’s a bit chillier than I realized. I should have brought a heavier coat.”

"Yes. You should have also brought a scarf and some gloves." Eobard began shrugging off his own
coat. “Here.” He proffered it.

Barry blinked, surprise filling his face. “Oh, no, that’s not neces-

“Take it, Barry. I’m a vampire, which means I have a lower body temperature. I rarely get cold. This coat really only serves an aesthetic purpose, which is unnecessary on a hike in the woods. You will get more use out of it than I will.”

“Okay...” Barry accepted it carefully, as if worried he might somehow damage it. “It’s warm...”

“To be honest, I always feel a little too warm in it.

“Hope it fits over mine.”

“You’re still scrawny, so of course it will.”

“You don’t have to be so callous about it,” Barry practically pouted as he pulled the new layer on. Eobard couldn’t help but stare. It wound up looking a little silly over Barry’s own coat, and it was a little loose on Barry in spite of the layers. Still, just the fact Barry was wearing his clothes made him feel...hungry, but not for blood. Of course, Barry had worn his clothes before, but now... Eobard was far more taken with the idea than he had been previously.

“What?” Barry asked, face scrunching. “It looks utterly ridiculous, doesn’t it?”

“Like I told you before, aesthetics are useless in the woods,” Eobard assured him. “Regardless, it doesn’t look ridiculous.”

Barry gave a light hum in response. Eobard took in a deep breath, forcing himself to peel his eyes from his blood servant. Getting distracted with unwanted thoughts now was not a good idea. Instead, he focused on the brilliant colors around him. He always enjoyed autumn the most. The temperature was perfect for a vampire, the skies usually not too bright, the trees gorgeous to gaze upon.

“Have you ever had a blood servant before me?” Barry asked out of nowhere.

Eobard took a breath. “Long ago, I did. But that was before my sire died.”

“So you had two blood servants?” Barry asked. “For both of you?”

Eobard chuckled. “Alas, no. Just one. A few that came before, but... I don’t remember them. That was...so long ago.”

“Why one servant? That couldn’t be enough for two vampires.”

“He wasn’t. However...acquiring a blood servant is a matter of chance more than anything. It takes a certain... Hmm, how should I put this? ...Not just any human can be just any vampire’s servant. A lot of factors come in to play. Blood quality of the human, blood preferences of the vampire, the personalities of the vampire and the human. Of course, it was easier to find a servant to suit a vampire’s needs back when they were more common, but it didn’t always work out well... As for one human feeding two vampires... We took some from the blood servant, and the rest we would hunt. Sometimes he helped us find targets.”


“Because we were hunting anyway, and he was...loyal.” Eobard shrugged. “Blood servants saw themselves as much a part of vampire culture as vampires do. Many of them even hoped to be turned
eventually. Some were simply more zealous than others.”

"Which one was he?"

"The latter." Eobard grinned. "I must say your curiosity of my kind seems to only grow with time."

"I just..." Barry hesitated, as if struggling to find words. "I just want to understand. There is so much...I don't."

"A desire to understand others shows a true intelligence many lack," Eobard reflected softly. He glanced over to find the younger man avoiding his gaze. He fought the urge to slow down so Barry would be in front of him and he could gaze over his form as they walked. He didn’t.

“Are there any lakes around here?” Barry asked, peering into the dense woods as if he thought one might be hiding behind the next set of trees.

“You want to see a lake?” Eobard asked. “There’s one to the west up the incline there. It’s quite a view this time of the year.”

“Sounds good,” Barry said.

“Then follow me.” Eobard took the lead. "Watch your step. It's a little muddy."

They didn't say much as they trekked up the hill. The silence between them felt...strange. Eobard couldn't quite identify if it was tension or awkwardness or something else. Judging from Barry's body language, it was probably a combination of all those things.

“Wow,” Barry breathed when they reached the top and passed through the trees there. He gazed out over the still waters reflecting the colorful trees in their mirror-like surface. “It’s beautiful!” he sighed.

Eobard stared at Barry, a warmth flooding his chest so intense, he found he wanted to do...*something*. What that something was, he wasn't sure... Maybe pull Barry into a hug and refresh his memory on what it was like to have Barry's soft lips on his. He observed Barry's face. The mortal looked quite young like this, healthy, happy and relaxed, Eobard had to admit...and it took his breath away. He knew that he was proud of how much Barry had improved health-wise since coming to his manor.

“Yes, beautiful,” Eobard agreed. *Like you*. “The waters are quite clean and clear... In the summer, you can even swim here, if you want. If you don't mind the snakes.”

“I don’t know how to swim."

“I could teach you.”

Barry shifted. “Uh, yeah, maybe. However, I'm not sure I'm fond of the idea of snakes."”

“They're mostly on the east side where all the thickest debris is... Never been bit before... And we can also go fishing. There’s some delicious trout.”

Barry peered around. “You see the bank over there? Can we climb it? It would provide a better view of the lake.”

Eobard followed Barry’s pointing finger to the incline leading up to a flat section of earth that was several feet above water level. “If you wish.” When Barry gave affirmation, the two of them made their way over to the spot, climbing a steep and slightly muddy hill to reach the top of the bank.
Barry paused at the edge, standing in front of Eobard while admiring the lake. Eobard let his gaze roam over Barry's generously clothed body as he pictured wrapping his arms around the human's waist, resting his head on those lean shoulders. Barry pulled him from his thoughts, saying, “I just can't get over how pretty it is here. If only we could get a painting of it.”

“I think I do have a painting of it lying around somewhere at the manor. But if not, then yes, it deserves one.”

Barry wandered over to a tree that jutted sideways off the bank, hanging over the water. “Perfect spot to sit and really enjoy the view.”

Eobard followed close behind Barry, wondering if he should help his pet balance. Cautiously, the human stepped onto the log. Eobard found his body tensing. He resisted the urge to reach out. “Don't fall. That's a decent drop.”

“I won't. I used to go hiking a fair amount. I can balance on this big log easily.”

Eobard wondered why Barry seemed so proud of this fact. It wasn't exactly a major accomplishment. Barry strolled forward, balancing quite well with confidence. As the man made his way a few feet out and smoothly reached the bottom branches, Eobard believed that he’d crossed logs like this before. There, the human took a seat, legs dangling off the log. “Come on!” He called. “Don't tell me you're afraid.”

Eobard snorted. Without missing a beat, he moved with ease to where Barry was. “I thought you didn't want me in your personal space, Barry.”

“For this,” Barry said, playfully, “I'll make an exception,”

”A relief. There is not much room on this branch.”

Barry chuckled and looked down at the water. “Hey. I think I just saw something swimming in there. We really should have brought some poles.”

“You would scare all the fish away.”

“ I would scare them away? You're the scary one of the two of us!”

“And you are the noisy one. Fish hear you, not see you. Well, they don’t hear. They feel the sound vibrations traveling through the water.”

Eobard merely stood on the log, though, giving Barry a foot of personal space. It seemed to be sufficient enough. For awhile, they just talked about various, mostly menial things - Barry’s new favorite book from the library, the apparently intimidating array of chemicals in the laboratory, and how the man had befriended most of the stray cats that liked to hang out in the shed. Of course he would. Still, Eobard found himself amused by the mental image of Barry holding kittens in his arms. Barry had even named them, apparently.

As Barry described an idea to help the cats stay warm in the winter, Eobard stopped, considering something that had crossed his mind a few times, but he had yet to actually do. He knew his sudden silence had caught the man's attention. Barry eyed him curiously, saying nothing. Eobard closed the distance between them, reaching into the pocket of his coat on Barry.

”What are you-?” Barry started.

Eobard dragged a small pendant from the pocket, dangling it. There was a red gemstone at the end,
glittering gently. "I sometimes...wear this...” Eobard decided to leave out the fact that his sire had sometimes wore it too. "I want to give it to you."

"To me?"

_It’s prettier on you_, he thought. “And before you complain about it being womanly, or some other such nonsense- just- consider it a good luck token.” He opened the chain of the necklace, sliding it on around Barry's smooth neck, hooking it in place securely. He heard Barry's breath hitch.

Barry said nothing for a few seconds, seeming lost for wards. Then, finally, he whispered, "...are you sure?"

“Yes. It was a...gift...just as you are.”

Barry tensed, something wary creeping into his eyes. “What does that mean?”

“It means that pure fortune brought you into my life...as a blood servant. I...love your blood.”

Barry shifted, and Eobard wondered if he realized how close they were like this. Barry muttered, “and just why do I need a good luck token?”

“Don’t we all?” Eobard whispered.

Eobard could hear the man's pulse pick up, again. Really, this routine was growing old. Barry’s gaze averted. “Yeah, of course. Can’t hurt, right?”

Eobard wanted to lean in and kiss those lips, wanted to hear the warm body flushed against him. Eobard also wanted to snarl, yell and scream, to shake Barry until some sense somehow fell into his brain. He wanted to do anything, anything that might snap Barry out of his delusions. With the mounting agitation, he decided he would push his luck just a bit. He sat down on the log next to Barry, trying to gauge the man’s reaction. There was no noticeable one. Eobard knew that Barry was used to him being close at this point, but he also knew he'd promised Barry he would be more conscious of his space - only, right now, he couldn’t. Being near him was intoxicating.

Eobard wondered, what would happen, if-

“I wish I could have gone to a university,” Barry said, gazing out at the lake, eyes distant. “There’s so much I want to learn.”

“Are you finding my library insufficient for what you wish to learn?” Eobard asked, reining in the- the need to touch.

“I...well, it’s not _that_ exactly...” Barry frowned. “I just want to know everything I can about science, about astronomy, the stars. I want to know all of the sciences of the world, and not just to _know_, but because there has to be a way to...make a difference with that. How will I make a difference just being _here_?” He turned and met Eobard’s gaze, almost hopelessly. “I keep trying to...be someone, to not waste this life I have, but all I do is fail. Repeatedly... But what should I expect, with the way things-” He shook his head. “Nevermind, this is silly."

Eobard's willpower shattered. He wrapped an arm around his human. Barry stiffened. Even so, he didn't pull away. “Making a difference isn’t about _means_, Barry,” Eobard offered. “There are men who go through the best institutions and academies and never leave a single mark on this world. And then there are men who come from _nothing_, and they change everything. You certainly have the drive to do so, and I think that is enough. So learn, Barry, and maybe one day, you'll have the
opportunity to do well by that knowledge... It's also worth noting that even if you do not leave a mark, it doesn't mean your life was a waste. History has a...selective memory."

"Those are...good points."

"Relax." Eobard took the next moment to press his face into Barry's shoulder, breathing his incredible scent.

"W-what are you d-doing?" Barry stammered out, nervousness radiating off of him.

"You...smell so good."

"I- th-thanks?" Barry stammered.

Eobard could hear his racing heart, and he knew, without a doubt, Barry wanted this, and that want came from a place deep within him. "You're welcome." Damn it all. Eobard didn't want to care about anything else right now. He just wanted to stop fighting his desire. If only Barry could let go of his silly presumptions and reservations. May as well...try, just this once. Eobard put his other hand on Barry's thigh, and pushed his face against his velvety, vulnerable neck. He dared a small kiss there, a mere press of his mouth.

Barry jerked, causing Eobard to pull back from his pulse point. "Hey! Let me know beforehand when you decide to feed!" The human berated.

"That's not what I'm doing."

"Then what are you doing?!!" Barry exclaimed, too tense for Eobard's liking.

"I am...trying to comfort you."

"Comfort me?"

"You seemed a little miserable just now."

"I- No- I-I don't need a hug." Barry said, squirming and pushing at him. His resistance really was rather weak, Eobard thought, as he considered not letting go. Still, he knew that would get him nothing but resentment. Scowling, he released his grip on his human. "I thought you said you were going to give me space, anyway!" Barry muttered, almost bitterly as he massaged his neck. Eobard noted the man's heart was pounding.

"Of course. My apologies." Swallowing his disappointment, Eobard swiftly stood and moved a couple steps down the log. He should really have learned by now that he couldn't push Barry. Barry was incredibly stubborn. Eobard regretted touching him. No, he thought, it wasn't that Barry didn't know what he was feeling. Barry was obviously very aware of his feelings. He just wouldn't admit them. It explained why he was so adamant on avoiding closeness when Eobard gave no indication it was anything more than just comfort.

"I suppose we should probably head back," Barry said, seeming to withdraw into himself. "My face is pretty numb from the cold."

"Yes, we should."

"Thanks for coming out here with me." He didn't really sound that grateful.

Eobard ignored his ingratitude. "It's a good thing I did or you probably would have gotten lost."
Barry said nothing and clambered to his feet, his expression stony.

Barry stepped forward. His other foot slipped on a loose piece of bark, breaking it. He gave a yelp as he tilted, and Eobard threw out a hand reflexively to catch him. He snagged a handful of his own coat, but Barry's thin form slipped right out of it. Eobard watched him falling, falling, feeling his eyes widen. What was it he'd instructed of the mortal? Don't fall? Why didn't Barry ever listen?

The human hit the water. Eobard threw the coat onto the bank and tore his own shirt off. It was ruined. He didn't care. He dived into the lake after Barry, barely blinking at the cold water. For a moment, his heart sped into overdrive as he peered into the dark depths. He saw nothing. He scanned and scanned, seconds from panicking. Then, mercy was granted. He saw the faintest of movements, saw Barry. He grabbed his shirt and yanked him out of the lake. He dropped him on the shore.

"I told you not to fall!" Eobard snapped.

Barry coughed and choked. He was hyperventilating and shivering viciously. "G-g-god hu-" he choked some more, spitting water. "D-d-damn-"

"Barry!" Eobard began to rip off the soaked layers of clothing on him. He paused. "Barry, listen to me- I need to get these off of you. It's only going to make you colder, otherwise."

Barry met his gaze. Somehow, through all his shaking, he managed a nod.

Eobard stripped the man down completely. He grabbed his own coat and the remains of his shirt from the bank, wrapping them around Barry as best he could. He scooped up his human and raced back to the manor in a heartbeat. He took Barry straight to his room, putting him on the bed and piling several blankets around him. Once he had Barry situated, he started the fire in the fireplace, stoking it to life as quickly as he could manage. Unfortunately, fire was not as fast a vampire, so he had to exercise his own patience.

Flames soon licked at the chimney. Eobard realized he still had on his own wet clothes. With a shrug, he raced to his preferred bedroom, peeled them off, and replaced them with fresh, dry clothes.

By the time he got back to Barry, the man was no longer hyperventilating, but he was still shivering.

Eobard climbed onto the bed and inserted himself under the covers next to Barry.

"Y-you d-d-don’t h-have to-" Barry started.

"Would you rather develop illness from being cold and wet?" Eobard asked.

Barry relented almost immediately, pressing into Eobard. He was shivering so violently. "I-i-it’s s-so c-c-cold."

"There, there," Eobard murmured, "it'll be warm soon."

Eobard reflected on what he’d seen of Barry’s exposed body out there. While in the midst of an emergency, he hadn’t gotten to truly appreciate it. However, comparing it to the memory of the last time he’d seen Barry nude, he had to admit he was glad his ribs weren't so pronounced now, his stomach not so sunken, frame not so skeletal. It was obvious he’d put on a bit of weight. Eobard was glad for it. More weight meant more blood, and such evidence only confirmed his improving health.

He shifted, glad Barry was safe.

Still, he didn't feel as happy as he should. He thought about what would have happened if Barry had
gone to the lake alone. The very idea made his stomach churn and chest tighten. After falling into the lake, Barry would have went into shock, and, unable to do anything coherent in the frigid waters, he would have drowned. In that scenario, it was entirely possible Eobard would have never known what had happened to his pet. He tried to shake that sickening feeling away.

He remembered Damien complaining about how fragile humans were, about how Barry wouldn’t last long. Maybe he was right. In another place in his thoughts, Eobard thought about his sire. His Love would not have approved of how much he had come to value Barry's life, especially so quickly, especially when Barry barely returned the favor.

"You can't become so attached, Eobard. Unlike us- vampires - you're guaranteed to lose your human pets eventually. It's just a matter of time, and time has no meaning to us."

Maybe sparing Barry's life really had been a mistake.

Eobard had a sour taste in his mouth. He didn't want to think like this.

Barry voice broke into his thoughts, soft, “y-you’re really fast. I-I can’t believe h-how fast vampires are.”

Eobard realized his human's shivering had died down. “Oh, it’s just me.”

“J-just you?”

“Well, your average vampire is much faster than your average human, but I am certainly much faster than all other vampires. And no, I’m not just boasting. My vampire bloodline is known for producing uncommonly fast vampires. It has also helped keep us alive. More of our line has survived than most. My sire’s sire yet lives with his own sire, and they have many kin. There are also some vampires...that I have turned that are still alive... Some I regret giving such gifts to... Still, I am faster than any of them.”

“I s-see. That’s q-quite a p-power.”

“Indeed. It has proven very useful on many occasions. And look, it helped save your life too. You would have probably died if I hadn't been there.” Eobard hoped being blunt would give Barry more caution in the future.

Barry went quiet. For awhile longer, the shivers continued, but they faded to nothing. Eobard noticed that Barry’s breathing and heartbeats had both slowed significantly. A quick glance down revealed that the man had fallen asleep next to him. Eobard was a bit too warm at this point, buried under so many covers, but he stayed. Barry needed this warmth. He would stay with him until he got all he needed. Eobard decided to appreciate their closeness. He didn't get many opportunities to.

Barry stirred sleepily. He pushed closer to Eobard. Eobard jumped when a firm arm curled around his waist and Barry’s face settled on his chest. He shifted his body further up against Eobard's. For his own part, Eobard was shocked by the sudden, intimate contact. He'd never expected it to ever happen. It must’ve been caused by Barry’s sleep-addled brain seeking more warmth. Barry's position and grip were both...arousing. Eobard stoically ignored his own body’s reaction. He relaxed as best he could, putting his chin on top of Barry's head.

He stayed with the younger man until he stirred from sleep awhile later. Eobard didn’t know how much time passed exactly, but it was enough for it to get stifling hot, for Barry's hair to dry, and for the sun to fully vanish outside, leaving only moonlight to shine through the curtains. Barry stretched, mumbling, eyes blinking open. He gazed up with evident confusion. His expression slowly cleared,
and he reached up and rubbed at his eyes.

"How do you feel?" Eobard asked, forcing himself not to reach out and cup Barry's cheek.

“I’m sore,” Barry muttered.

“Probably from all that shivering. Just relax now.”

“That was probably the coldest I’ve ever been,” Barry complained. “Thanks for helping me warm up.” This time, he did sound grateful. Eobard saw his face turn red, and he cleared his throat. “Um...I—I’m not wearing any clothes, am I?”

“No. They were soaked, and replacing them seemed pointless... I suppose that this makes us mostly even, after my immodesty this morning.”

Barry gave a shaky laugh. “Yeah, I suppose it does.” He paused. "Wait, are you sweating?"

Eobard paused, and yes, there were droplets gathered on his face. "It's...rather warm for me."

"You don't have to lay with me any longer. I feel much better, now. T-thank you, though. I appreciate it."

Eobard hesitated as he gazed into Barry's eyes, but his human seemed to be warm enough now. While Eobard enjoyed being curled up with Barry like this, an excuse to finally escape the suffocating heat that had built up under the blankets couldn’t be passed up. He extricated himself from the bed. “Why don’t you rest some more?” he suggested. “You look like you could use it. Plus, it's your normal sleeping time anyway. You can just get up for breakfast tomorrow. I'll have it read, as usual.”

“O-okay,” Barry said, shifting under the blanket. "I am still rather exhausted."

"Oh, and just so you're aware, I put the pendant I gave you earlier on the night stand. I'm surprised it didn't get lost in the confusion, but there it is..." Barry followed his gesture to the nightstand, gazing at the pendant for a few seconds. "So much for it being good luck," Eobard muttered.

"Professor, I'm fine."

Eobard looked away for a minute before refocusing on Barry's eyes. "I'm...relieved you are alright. But don't act like you didn't almost die."

"You worry too much. Humans aren't as pathetic as you seem to think. We can survive a lot."

Eobard frowned and pivoted away to check the fire. He added a fresh log just to make sure it lasted. He turned, noting that Barry had shut his eyes and seemed to be trying to get back to sleep. "Good night, Barry," Eobard murmured before leaving the room and gently shutting the door behind him.
Barry was straining, muscles burning and aching; he'd never felt so sore. He was only a third of the way through this, and he was already so exhausted. Just how long had it been since he'd started? An hour? Two? *I'm never going to finish at this rate.*

He raised his shaking arms, and swung down.

The small log spun out from under Barry's axe, falling off the chopping block with only a thick scar on it to show his efforts. Barry took a deep breath, turning his axe upside down to rest it upon the ground. He leaned over, heaving air, feeling sweat trickling down his brow. It was amazing how overheated he felt, as cold as it was outside. It was cold enough his lungs stung with every gasp. December was fast approaching. The nights had started dropping below freezing, and the grass was yellowing. The leaves on the trees were mostly dried up and gone at this point.

Barry's eyes landed on the pile of wood he still had yet to chop, and he groaned.

The sound of footsteps reached him, a steady crunching in the dying grass. He already knew it was Professor Thawne, so he made no effort to look. Barry only dragged his gaze up when Professor Thawne reached him. He saw the immortal's eyes narrow. "Why do you have so many logs left?" He asked with an impatient gesture.

Barry had to laugh. Sometimes these interactions were utterly absurd.

"Ah, I see," Professor Thawne said, seeming to do a double take. "I forgot...You mortals can barely lift even one little stick." He snatched up the axe. He took the log Barry had missed, sat it back in place, and smashed it apart in a single stroke.

Barry sighed. The log wasn't just cut, it was destroyed. Wiping sweat off his brow, Barry muttered, "You weren't wrong when you called me scrawny."

"In all fairness, Barry, I didn't mean to splinter it," the Professor said. He nudged the pieces with his boot. "Sometimes mortals' limits are beneficial in not unintentionally destroying or damaging things. You'd be surprised how lightly I must handle everything. Ah, well, it will make for decent tinder." He cleared the chopping block of the debris the last log had left. "Since you are so far behind, and obviously so exhausted, I'll just finish this up for you." Professor Thawne unbuttoned his shirt and tossed it aside. Barry wasn't prepared for the shock of pale skin shining in the light. Returning his grip to the axe, Professor Thawne grabbed his next log. He swung down, muscles pronounced and rippling.

Barry stared, tugging on his left sleeve. He wondered what sin he was committing, the one of envy, because he found himself longing for that power, or the one of... The one of...

He forced himself to look away, a heavy feeling settling over his heart.

"Here." Professor Thawne said. Barry's attention was drawn to the axe currently being offered to him. His eyes moved past it to the vampire. Professor Thawne wasn't even sweating. "Finish the last few. I've got to check on dinner." Barry nodded and took the axe while trying not to gape. The handle was warm where Professor Thawne had held it.
He winced as he hefted it. His gaze darted to the form striding away from him, dropping down the man's pale back to the point where his line of skin ended and the cloth of his pants began. Professor Thawne looked like a living marble idol.

Barry mentally shook himself and approached the pile. Log after log, he forced himself to work, ignoring his pain as best he could. He tried not to think of how quickly Professor Thawne had gone through the stack. Ten minutes, maybe less, for what Barry had spent hours on. He wanted to be good for this, he thought as he aimed at the next log. He wanted to be useful, he realized as the dead wood split. He didn't want to be a pointless weight whose only value was providing blood to an immortal, didn't want to be someone who couldn't earn his keep, didn't want to be worthless, lazy, incompetent-

It wasn't that he'd never done hard work before, but his time here at the manor had made him indolent. That needed to change, and he would prove it could. And it's not the professor I need to prove this to, but myself.

The last log split, and Barry heaved a large sigh of relief. He dropped the axe near the block, panting.

"Good," Professor Thawne's voice declared. Barry jumped, he hadn't heard the approach this time. Professor Thawne grabbed his abandoned shirt from the ground, pulling it on and buttoning it down. "Dinner is nearly ready."

Barry nodded, stretching his tired muscles and yawning. He turned to the manor, trying to ignore how painful his back and arms and shoulders had become. He took a step.

"Barry."

"Yes?" Barry answered, turning back to the other man.

"I am getting rather hungry myself. It has been almost a month since I last fed." Professor Thawne moved toward him until only a few steps of space separated them. "However, it is, of course, up to you when to bare your neck for me."

Barry's heart skipped. An intense, all-too-familiar feeling ran through his body. He shrugged, shoving the sensation down. "Okay, you may as well just feed now, get it over with. Dinner should make up for the blood loss." He paused, reconsidering. "Unless you'd rather I cleaned up a bit first, I'm kind of a mess--"

"Unnecessary." The professor closed the distance between them, grabbed his arm and pulled him close.

"That's not what you said my first night here," Barry replied with a snort.

"God, you have no clue how absolutely filthy you were, do you? The thin layer of sweat on your skin now doesn't even compare."

"It wasn't that bad."

"You looked like a feral animal."

"Funny, I thought something similar when you bared your fangs the first time."

Professor Thawne tilted his head. "Is that so?" His thumb flicked across the back of Barry's neck. "I am glad we both see each other differently now."
"Yeah," Barry muttered, adverting his gaze. "Aren't you going to feed?" He asked, impatience entering his voice. He moved his head, exposing his throat.

"So eager, Barry?" Amusement echoed in the words.

"I want to get to my own dinner sometime tonight." And you're too close again, he thought, staring into the silent, dead woods on the edge of the lawn. He could feel warm air fanning across his throat, and he didn't know whether he hated or loved it.

"Of course." Pain surged through his neck as the professor sank his fangs in. The embrace tightened, and Barry shut his eyes. He reveled in the feeling of the hug, the contact he couldn't have from anyone else. The lonely feelings melted away and even with the pain of the bite, even knowing he was currently losing blood, everything felt better.

Dinner was rather quiet, but not awkward. Barry was quite hungry after the events that had occurred outside, so he was far too busy stuffing his mouth with delicious pork, potatoes, and beans to waste time speaking. Professor Thawne, for his part, merely sipped on wine while staring distantly at the wall as if lost in another place and time. Barry couldn't help but think the vampire tended to get rather...detached after feeding.

Once finished with the meal, Barry took his plate to the sink.

He heard the vampire murmur for the first time in awhile. "Tempus neminem manet."

He diverted his attention to the immortal. "What?"

Professor Thawne shook his head as if waking from a daze, eyes fixing on Barry. "...'time waits for no man.' I was thinking how quickly everything moves. It seems like it's been only hours since I first walked into that decrepit little shack you lived in to drain you."

"Really?" Barry asked, trying not to be unnerved by the reminder this was the same being who'd been so intent on killing him. And now I trust him... He should probably question the wisdom of such a decision more thoroughly.

"Well...I am exaggerating somewhat..." the vampire admitted. "I can't truly explain it... Time...blurs together. It does not seem chronological, the way history books say. No, it seems like everything that I experienced happened all at once, or...close to all at once... Sometimes I forget large chunks at a time, but will recall it all later. I have woken up many times before, disoriented, not recognizing my surroundings because I expect to wake up in Roma. Fortunately, these moments usually pass quickly."

"Is that where you are from? Rome?"

"Yes. I lived in what is now known as ancient Rome. It was..." he seemed to search for his next words, "...more sanitary than it is now..." He suddenly looked unfocused again. "Then there are other times I wake up, and I cannot recall for hours why he is not at my side. And I search...and search...until it comes back to me..."

Barry's chest felt knotted. "And by him, you mean..."

He saw the immortal's eyes cloud. "My sire. Meus amor."

Barry's discomfort only grew. "Why don't you ever say his name?" he asked brusquely, feeling a frown form on his face.
"He took many names, fleeting and frequent," the professor said with a small shake of the head, seeming not to notice Barry's agitation. "The titles I used - still use - feel more...permanent."

Barry's discomfort was replaced with a sudden doubt. "What if one day you wake up, and you don't remember who I am? You could...drain me."

"My mind would be hard pressed to forget you." Barry felt a burning sensation in his face before the vampire continued, "Regardless, these episodes do not occur often. A few times a century approximately, and they rarely last long enough to be...problematic."

"That doesn't mean it won't happen."

"I started keeping a journal after the last time this occurred to help jog my memory should it ever happen again. Plus, I often check the calendar as a habit to make sure I do not think I am in another time or place."

Silence settled in. Barry retook his seat, thinking. Finally, he decided to ask, "Would you...teach me Latin?"

Professor Thawne blinked. "Why do you wish to learn it?"

“Well, you like to talk in it for one, so I never know what you're saying. Also, you have books that aren't translated yet that seem to be in Latin. It would be nice to read them. Besides... If I’d been able to afford an education, I would have learned it by now. You said I can learn as much as I want to here."

“I see.” The professor drained his glass. "Then I will teach you..." A smile crept across his face. "You know, I have not gotten to teach in awhile. It should prove...interesting."

Barry smiled back. "Is that why you are called Professor Thawne? You used to be a professor?"

“Yes, I became a professor at one time. The title stuck, even though it's been centuries since I’ve had students."

“It sounds like you've done a lot in your time," Barry noted almost wistfully. “You’ve surely seen some interesting things. Anything worth sharing?"

“Hmmm..." the professor considered. "There is a lot worth sharing. The Vikings, for example, had many female warriors in their armies. The people who wrote of them could not fathom women in the military, though, and so it is not well known-"

“There were?" Barry asked in astonishment.

“Oh yes, certainly. Where do you think Sara comes from?"

“She certainly...seemed far different than any other woman I’ve met.”

“Indeed."

“How...how were women in the military, though?" Barry asked. “Isn’t that especially grueling for them? Or were they all like...Sara?"

For some reason, that provoked a laugh from the immortal. His eyes danced with mirth. “To be truthful, I do not know for sure. I would think that is a fair assumption. An army of Saras."

"Sounds absolutely terrifying."
A mischievous glint spread across the immortal's face. "...Perhaps you should ask Sara if you see her again, just to be sure."

Barry groaned, his face burning. He buried it in his palms. "Are you trying to get me killed?" He muttered.

“I still can’t believe you thought I was serious that night.”

“I’m not proud of it.”

Barry looked back up to find Professor Thawne smirking again. It slipped away quickly, though. "Ah, enough about my knowledge... I'm curious about you."

"About me?!

"Is it so surprising?"

"I figured a little fragile mortal like myself wouldn't have much of interest to share with a two-millennia-old vampire."

"Don't be sore, Barry... I am simply curious. You are...my blood servant now, and yet I feel as though I barely know anything about you."

"Fine. Anything particular you wish to know?"

The professor refilled his wine glass. "Yes. I've been meaning to ask how it is you came to live alone. You seem to enjoy the company of others, and I don't see why others shouldn't enjoy your company." Barry exhaled, shrugging as Professor Thawne recorked the bottle. "Though, you do not have to feel obligated to share if you do not want to."

"No, it's alright," Barry responded, avoiding the intense gaze. "In truth, I've never had a lot of friends growing up because I... always wanted to do little experiments. I collected insects, played at being a doctor, mixed some of my father's medicines to see what would happen. He was a doctor. A lot of older folk then thought I was going to grow into some kind of freak I suppose...and their whispers kept their children away, usually. It didn't help when younger me became enthralled with the fantastical and the supernatural, especially when I snuck a book about mythical beings into church one morning and got caught. I remember my mother being yelled at by the pastor for letting me keep such things. In truth, it was my father who purchased it on one of his trips to London."

"Mythical beings?" the professor asked, eyebrows raising.

"Vampires, werewolves, ghouls, ghosts, the undead, also fairies and feyfolk, unicorns-"

"So you have been interested in vampires for a long time, have you?" Some amusement crept into the question.

"Yes..." In truth, Barry had always held a fascination for vampires above all the others, had always been more convinced of their existence. Of course, he wasn't about to admit that and make the professor smug. "Wait, are there other mythical beings that...exist?"

"Werewolves exist. They prefer not to interact with my kind though. And in turn we tend not to interact with theirs. While similar values have evolved amongst our cultures, our greatest divide is our need for blood, and theirs only for flesh."

"Whoa!" Barry said, shifting forward. "What about the others!? Do they exist-"
"No."

"No?" Barry asked, disappointment filling him. "Not even ghosts?"

The professor chuckled at that. "Ah... Well I do not think so, though there are some amongst vampire kind who indeed think they do. I have never found solid evidence." He cleared his throat. "I believe you have gotten off track, Barry. You were telling me about how you came to live by yourself..."

"Oh right." He gathered his thoughts. "Well, it seemed that a lot about that strange younger me translated into adulthood because I still never had many friends even as I got older. Also I did not know much of my family outside of my mother, father, and an old family friend who was like a grandmother to me... Hmm, I told you of the friend who got lynched on sodomy claims. I had another friend who moved to go to a university in London. Back then, I thought I'd just follow in my father's footsteps and become a doctor, maybe open my own practice somewhere...but when I was barely a man, my parents...they got deathly sick. They passed away in spite of all our efforts to save them..." Barry paused and swallowed at a lump in his throat, trying to quell the misery he hadn't thought would return quite this strongly.

"I'm sorry, Barry," Professor Thawne murmured. "Have you been alone so long?"

"Ah, heh, not really... I wasn't completely alone. There was still the family friend... And it wasn't long before I became smitten with a beautiful girl named Iris, whom I wished to marry." He felt his face burn again, and he shifted. But as his thoughts sifted through those memories, he found himself frowning again. "I was going to marry her... It was seven years ago when I made that promise. I made it, even though her father disapproved, mainly because I was so poor... But we were going to elope, there was nothing else for it. But...he found out first. I think. They vanished, never to be heard of again... I tried to find her, but I could only do so much. I couldn't travel, I couldn't hire anyone, being penniless. I tried a few favors, but they turned up nothing... After that, I was alone, except for the family friend who came to visit on the weekends. She passed away last year... And I've been mostly by myself ever since."

The vampire said nothing.

Barry shook his head, pushing the miserable thoughts away. "Anyway, people thought I went mad from all that - it's a small town, there's no secrets really - when I started openly investigating the vampire attacks, so it's not like I was going to make any new friends-"

A loud, heavy knocking echoed through the manor.

Barry saw Professor Thawne tense, his eyes flicking away from Barry. "I am not expecting any company," he muttered softly.

Barry felt his own nerves knot. If Professor Thawne was on edge, there was no way he could relax. He watched the vampire stand and pace out of the dining room. Barry half wondered if he should grab a weapon. Collecting himself, he followed.

Professor Thawne opened the door.

In the meager light that lingered from the setting sun, a smooth-faced man with brown hair stood. He was donned from head to toe in a black, sleek outfit with a matching dark top hat. The attire contrasted harshly with the man's pallid face. He was a handsome man, but when his attention landed on Barry, Barry felt like he was staring into the eyes of a predator. With a jolt, he realized this man was probably a vampire, if his skin was any indicator. The thick gloves he wore probably concealed deadly claws.
“You,” Professor Thawne growled. Barry glanced at him, surprised by the amount of hostility displayed on his face.

“Such poor manners, old man,” the visitor said in a crisp, smooth tone.

Apparently they know each other.

Professor Thawne scowled even harder, if possible. “I thought you said you weren’t ever going to show your face here again.”

“That was the intention. Unfortunately, we do not always get to follow through on our intentions, do we?” The man narrowed his eyes, glancing at Barry again. “You are really going to show such terrible manners in front of your pet? That’s unbecoming of you.”

Professor Thawne's jaw worked. Barry wondered why he obviously hated this vampire so much. And if the professor didn't dislike someone as awful as Damien Darhk, then just how terrible was this vampire? Of course, it was possible there was simply a conflict in personalities, but Barry figured it was more than that. The professor didn't strike him as the type to despise another vampire on this level without good reason. Professor Thawne turned sharply to Barry, even if his eyes didn't seem to leave the visitor. “Barry, this is Hunter Zolomon - Hunter, this is my blood servant Barry.”


Professor Thawne grabbed his wrist, yanking it back. Hunter frowned, and Professor Thawne bared his fangs. Barry stepped back in shock.

“Don’t even touch him,” Professor Thawne growled at Hunter, letting go roughly.

“Your level of rudeness is truly inspiring,” Hunter said, studying his offended wrist. "What do you have against a friendly handshake?"

The professor ignored that. "What do you want?"

"Let me in, I have a message for you."

“You can tell me here, then.”

“No,” Hunter replied. “I refuse to be treated like this when I have done no wrong. We may not have parted on the best of terms last we spoke, but I have traveled quite far to deliver this message that another should have been tasked with delivering. The least you could do is negate this inconvenience. I’m not even asking for a proper thank you, even though I have a right to.”

Professor Thawne’s lip curled. “Fine. Make it quick.”

“You really aren’t setting a good example for your new pet, Professor.”

Barry shrank back as the unfamiliar vampire entered the manor. “Kind of a nasty fellow, isn’t he?” Hunter said with amusement toward Barry before disappearing down a hallway. Barry figured he must’ve been here before quite often if he knew the layout of the house so well.

Professor Thawne gripped Barry's arm with a suddenness that made him jump. It was almost painful, and Barry meekly met the sharp gaze. "Don't leave my side while he is here. I trust him even less than our previous guests." Barry nodded. He couldn't argue the demand.

The three of them were soon in the parlor. Hunter dropped into one of the comfortable seats there,
stretching out like he owned it.

“Do you want something to drink?” Professor Thawne asked, voice not quite passing for amicable.

“Yes, I do. I know you likely have some bloodwine around. I would prefer that.”

Professor Thawne seemed even more annoyed, but he merely nodded. He went over to a cabinet, opening it and retrieving a dark bottle. He studied the bottle for a moment before uncorking it.

Barry took a seat that wasn't too far from Professor Thawne. Bloodwine? Was that made with actual blood? Probably. He decided he would have to ask the professor about it later. He looked up from his hands. He almost flinched when he found the newcomer's harsh gaze hungrily locked on him.

“Tell me, kid. You regret becoming Eobard’s pet?”

“I- No,” Barry said. “I d-don’t.” He saw the professor glance at him sideways before pouring some wine into a glass.

“Give it time,” Hunter said, pulling off his gloves. As anticipated, sharp claws lay underneath. He flexed them thoughtfully. “Everyone comes to regret knowing Eobard Thawne sooner or later. There's a reason he is usually alone.”

Barry was miffed by such a statement. “What does that mean?” Tumbled out before he could stop it.

Hunter glanced at Professor Thawne, a small grin on his face.

“Go on, Hunter,” Professor Thawne said, sounding oddly less hostile than before. In fact, he seemed amused. “You have something you wish to inform my pet about me? I have nothing to hide. Unlike you.”

“Professor Thawne here is quite particular with everything,” Hunter said, "You've probably noticed he...is very controlling, cruel, aggressive. The reason he lives alone is because other vampires can’t stand him for very long.”

“Isn't that just horrible?” Professor Thawne mocked. “I live alone? That's the worst you've got on me? Hah! At least I respect our laws.”

“If you didn't want someone who breaks laws to become a vampire, you shouldn't have turned a man in a prison cell." Hunter scowled.

Professor Thawne turned him? Barry was a little surprised to find this out. He wondered even more why there was so much vitriol between them. Surely the professor wouldn't turn someone he despised.

Hunter continued, “no, even if I wasn’t a criminal before, what is to be respected of vampire law? It is old, so old that it is as fragile as glass. It’s high time for change. Mortal law almost makes more sense.”

"Dura lex sed lex."

"Don't spew a dead language at me, old man."

"You are only angry that you do not understand what I say. As a vampire, you should."

“The language is as useless and outdated as the laws of our kind.”

"You mean the laws that keep us alive?"
“Your sire would disagree, Eobard.”

Professor Thawne surged forward a few steps. Barry thought he might tear into their guest, but he stopped short, hands tense and claws popped out. Barry swallowed, his gut tightening, heart racing. It was an alarming sight, even if the threat wasn't being directed at him. He sometimes forgot just how deadly this man was, that he'd once so carelessly risked his life against him.

“Vampire law has kept us alive?” Hunter sneered, apparently unbothered by the display. He hadn't even moved. “No, it has kept us scared. It has left us at the mercy and whims of petty creatures who can't even comprehend our existence. Creatures whose minds are so small, they have to make up fictional stories to even believe we could exist. And then they treat us just like that - fictional stories.” Hunter sat forward. “You can be angry if you want, but I did not mention my grandsire to incite rage, merely to prove a point. The men who bear silver against us, do so because our laws are weak.”

“You're still talking your nonsense, I see,” Professor Thawne muttered as he returned to the cabinet. He soon thrust the bottle of dark liquid and glass at the man. Some of its contents spilled, but if he noticed, he gave no acknowledgement of it. “And here I was wondering if you’d learned some wisdom since I last saw you. I was wrong.”

“Funny. I was just thinking something similar.” Hunter took a swig from the glass. He swallowed, and his face twisted. “Agh, gross. You drain a filthy whore into this decanter?” He asked shaking the bottle. “What’s the point of a pet if you aren’t making use of his blood for the best drinks?”

Apparently, it was made with human blood. Barry was disturbed. Just whose blood was in that bottle? Where had the professor gotten it?

“Give it here if you don’t like it,” Professor Thawne muttered. “For all you know, it is my pet’s blood.”

“Heh, I know you would only keep a pet of the finest blood - nothing so unpalatable,” Hunter said this with a lazy smirk in Barry’s direction. “So it can't be his.”

Barry was growing tired of vampires looking at him like he was just dinner. “I’m sitting right here, you know.”

“Yes. I can see that.” Hunter sat his glass aside and sprawled back again. “It seems Eobard’s poor manners have rubbed off on you, as well. You see, in my house, a pet wouldn’t dare speak without permission.”

“He is more than welcome to speak before you, Hunter,” Professor Thawne said with a smile as he moved to stand closer to Barry. “We both know that you aren’t allowed to keep pets because of your inability to care for them. You don’t have a right to be treated with respect by another vampire’s pets.”

“I care for them fine. It is they who do not care for themselves. Lazy. Ungrateful. Useless.” He bared his fangs. “Few are worth the trouble they give you.”

Barry's didn't want to be here anymore. He wanted to leave the parlor, to get away from their guest. But the professor had told him to stay close, and he wasn't about to argue with him on that in front of Hunter.

“We should be ruling mortalkind,” Hunter growled.

Professor Thawne scoffed. “As if that would work.” He let out a weary exhale. “I'm through with these petty debates. Just tell me what you want and leave. You are not welcome to stay.”
Hunter sat up straighter and folded his arms. “So be it. I was sent by Maximillian to warn you of a
group of vampire hunters that have entered the eastern territory, following the rumors of demons and
bloodsuckers. They killed Charles just a dozen kilometers to the west. There is reason to believe they
are following up on leads about you.”

“There should be no leads. I dispose of my evidence. Besides, why wouldn't Maximillian simply
bring this to me himself. I wonder if you are lying.”

"Why would I lie? I wouldn't make up a pathetic lie and then come here with it, I despise this place.”

"Not all evidence can be disposed of,” Barry murmured, hoping the rest went without saying. I
almost found you.

Both vampires looked at him, and Professor Thawne's face transformed into a glare of realization.

Barry quickly averted his own gaze.

Hunter spoke. “Regardless, you don’t have to believe me, I suppose. All I had to do was deliver the
message. It's of no concern of mine if they catch you off guard or not. It might be amusing if they
do.”

“I'm never off guard.”

“If you say so, Thawne. I shall leave now. I wish to start my journey back south as soon as possible,
and I can cover some ground before sunrise.” He stood. “Oh, Barry.” Barry looked up with surprise,
right into Hunter's cold gaze. Hunter's expression was odd, as if he was contemplating him as
something more than just dinner. What that something was, he didn't want to know. "I don't suppose
Thawne told you that he is the reason his sire is dead, why he is alone. Or why the last few partners
he's tried to settle with quickly left... Maybe consider that and ask yourself if you really want to be a
pet for such a creature.”

Barry saw Professor Thawne's fists clench from the corner of his eye.

Hunter grinned and made for the door to the parlor. Professor Thawne saw him out, leaving
Barry alone until he was done. He returned, an angry energy in his step as he moved through the
room. “I swear I would tear out his throat with my claws if vampire law did not forbid me taking the
life of another vampire,” the professor growled, putting up the bloodwine bottle and seizing the glass.
Barry wondered what Hunter had meant, but he decided not to pursue that topic just now. He didn't
want to further antagonize the immortal tonight.

"Was that human blood in that bottle?” Barry asked.

Professor Thawne stopped, a smile creeping across his face. "Actually, no. That particular bottle is
made with pig's blood. I keep it for exactly this purpose, to give to my least favorite guests... Or to
the guest who refuse human blood.”

Barry chuckled in spite of himself. He watched as the professor finished up and moved to one of the
seats with a fresh bottle.

"What about that stuff?” Barry pointed at it.

"Barry,” Professor Thawne said seriously, looking up from the bottle to gaze directly into his eyes.

"What?”
"I promised I would not hunt after I took you in. I have not broken that promise. Trust me, I've had this bottle for awhile, and I would not let it go to waste." He took a sip. "Besides, it was made with blood from another's pet. It was...a gift."

“Oh.” Barry cleared his throat, twiddling his thumbs.

"You must have questions about our recent guest."

Barry hesitated, then nodded slightly. "You...turned him into a vampire?"

“Yes. And it is one of my biggest mistakes."

“That’s what you meant by regretting giving some your gifts."

The professor let out a sigh. “Yes. Though in truth, he is the only one I truly regret turning... He is almost as fast as I am... And he abuses his powers whenever he can get away with it.”

"Why did you turn him, then? Did he deceive you?"

The vampire said nothing for a long while, and Barry thought he might not answer. "Because I was a fool, that is the only reason why..."

Barry decided that if the vampire was avoiding his question, he probably shouldn't push for an answer.

Professor Thawne spoke again. “You must be wondering what he meant, by it being my fault my sire is dead.” He looked down, and Barry waited for a few minutes before the answer was given. "My sire was alone that night because I simply did not wish to go on a starlit walk when he asked. That's it. One small whim, and I lost him. When the sun rose and he had not returned, I went looking, only to find a corpse with a silver stake driven in its chest... If I'd been there with him, there is a fair chance he would have survived."

Barry was taken with surprise by the amount of emotions swirling in his gaze when their eyes locked again. His heart twinged, and he felt...pity? "Or you might have died too," Barry said. "Think about it. They caught him off guard, and you would've been just as defenseless... And then we wouldn't be here now. I'd still be in that miserable house."

"Possibly. I'll never know." Professor Thawne folded his arms. "It is in the past now." Standing, he stepped towards Barry. "Regardless of anything, I don't trust that leech-sucker not to try anything tonight. He has a grudge against me, and you are not safe if he is in the area. He would harm you just to spite me. And so you will stay in my room tonight, and you will wear your mother's wedding band. This way I can watch over you, and you won't be helpless."

Barry nodded, shocked. Professor Thawne must be really agitated to be let him get out silver. "Okay... I will."

Chapter End Notes

Latin Translations (Just including what wasn't explicitly translated already in the chapter this time).
Roma - Rome
Meus Amor - My Love
Dura lex sed lex. - The law is hard, but it is the law.
“Professor, stop!” Barry exclaimed, batting at the cold hands tugging on his cravat.

Professor Thawne met his gaze, frowning. “It is crooked. The fresh bite scar is showing. I think I didn’t get it low enough when I fed.”

“I can fix it myself! Stop fussing like an old housewife! And who’s going to see me anytime soon besides you?”

“Fine, fine,” the vampire conceded, taking a step back. If Barry didn't know better, he'd think the vampire was sulking.

Barry adjusted the piece, realizing what he’d said. *Housewife*. Because why would his brain supply a better analogy? He sighed, muttering. “Why you even want to be around me while I wear silver, I don’t understand.” His mother's wedding band dangled on the same chain Professor Thawne had given him. It rested against the pendant, the red jewel. As angry as Professor Thawne had been over the silver before, it was almost shocking how little he seemed to care now.

“It is not so bad,” The professor insisted with a shrug. Of course he’d heard.

Barry tucked the jewelry under his shirt, figuring it was the least he could do in that moment to minimize it's effects, and finished with the cravat. He gazed into the mirror to ensure the bitemarks were well-hidden. Even if no one saw him, he couldn’t be too careful. "See?" He said, gesturing. "Hidden."

Professor Thawne was next to him, leaning in, pressing his face against Barry’s neck and inhaling deeply. "Well done."

"I've had a fair amount of practice hiding these recently." The thought crossed his mind, to pull away, to reclaim his space. Barry didn’t. He looked at the two of them in the mirror, and he couldn’t help thinking how safe this felt. It felt certain. He’d always feared for the future, had always feared being alone, and now— Well, now, those things didn’t seem as important as they once did. This place was as close to home as any could get.

A hand came up, touching Barry's jaw. Barry's heart leapt at the same time, as if intending to launch itself out of his throat. He started to turn to the vampire.

He gasped loudly, hand flying up. One of Professor Thawne's claws had sliced into his flesh. He finally put space between them. He realized his fingers were wet with blood.

“I’m sorry, Barry,” Professor Thawne said, eyes wide, closing the distance between them again. He was already bringing out a handkerchief from his pocket. “I did not mean to.”

“I know,” Barry said. When had the professor gotten so...*anxious* on his behalf? It wasn't like this sort of accident was anything new.

Professor Thawne started to dab at the injury, but Barry pushed his hand away. Their gaze's met, and Professor Thawne's brows furrowed. Barry swallowed, considering, then finally- “Why let it go to waste?” he whispered as the liquid beaded against his flesh.
“Good idea,” Professor Thawne practically purred. He leaned in and dragged his tongue across the wound. It was hot, wet. Barry shivered involuntarily. Lips gripped his skin, and Professor Thawne sucked. Barry wasn’t prepared for the sudden way in which the blood still in his body rushed downward, tightening his pants. He felt his face redden, and he angled away from the vampire.

The professor drew back, slowly dragging his tongue across his lips. Barry felt something like adrenaline shoot through him, and his hands began to shake.

A smile pulled at Professor Thawne's face. "Delicious. As much as I'd rather not accidentally cut you, I have to admit it does have it's benefits."

"That's uh- Good. Good." Barry nodded, struggling to hide his new problem. He rubbed at his face, which felt tingly. He needed to think of something - anything - else but the saliva that lingered on his skin. “Ah, um, the ring really doesn’t bother you?” He asked, pacing away from the mirror and the vampire. He pretended to rummage in his nightstand for something.

"Don’t worry about me. I’m fine. What two thousand year old vampire can't stand a little silver, hm?” Barry heard rustling and movement behind him. “Here, turn around. I wanted to give this to you today.”

Barry took a moment to ensure his pants were looser around his groin. He turned back to the professor, almost losing his thoughts at the other man's closeness again. Barry stared into his eyes, and his gaze dropped to what was being offered to him. “A knife?” Barry asked with surprise. It was a decent sized blade, and it was lodged in a black, leather sheath. The hilt was made of a sleek, ridged metal. It looked quite deadly, even covered.

Barry took it. It was somehow both heavier and lighter than he was expecting.

“Yes.”

Barry unsheathed it, and he felt himself start. From hilt to tip, even he recognized the pure, polished silver that was the blade. It was beautiful.

He glanced up to see Professor Thawne's face. It looked even paler now, eyes narrowed. Barry realized that the weapon was exhausting for him to face. He sheathed it again.

“That sheath makes it hard for a vampire to detect,” Professor Thawne stated. “But subsequently, it also protects us from the ill effects of the silver. It...is a weapon used by hunters, and assassins. Men who want to hide what they carry from my kind. I figure this would be useful...if...” he paused, frowning, "if a vampire ever tried to harm you. You can carry it without their knowing you have it.”

"And without it making you sick,” Barry guessed. Professor Thawne nodded. "...How...did you get this?"

"How do you think? From a hunter, of course. I figured it would make a good trophy. In this case, it appears to have an even better use."

To help protect me, Barry reflected. Barry realized this, this trust that was being placed in him, to keep him safe. Professor Thawne was risking his life, letting him bear all this silver. Is he really so afraid of that vampire, Hunter? No, fear isn't the right word. At least, he does not fear for himself...but... Of course, as his source of food, he'd want to keep me safe. the same way anyone would want to protect their food stores...

But if so, why would he be so anxious. Why go to the lengths of letting me bear silver, something so potentially deadly to him. Does he really trust me so soon? Or is he just willing to take that risk?
Barry realized he wanted to believe the vampire trusted him, and he also wanted the vampire to think of him as more than dinner. He wanted to think they...could be something like friends. Barry had never really considered if a vampire could truly care for another, but knowing the pain in his voice when he'd spoken of his sire's death, yes, he could care. But he'd known his sire for a long time, and that had been another vampire.

Could Professor Thawne truly care about Barry Allen, a little fragile mortal? It seemed unlikely.

Barry almost felt distressed at the thought, not knowing how to interpret what was happening, what he saw, what he felt.

“What?” Professor Thawne asked, brows scrunching again. “You aren't considering trying to stab me with that, are you? Maybe bring me in for my crimes?”

“No-” Barry said quickly, breath hitching. He wouldn't, couldn't. "...Not after everything.”

Professor Thawne smiled and patted his shoulder, then dropped his arm when Barry didn't react. “Good. You looked a little torn for a minute. Had me worried.”

"I'm just...surprised, is all. You...were so mad before at the thought of me carrying silver."

"The circumstances are different now. Before, there was no...potential danger to you from my kind...But now, I wouldn't risk... Well, I wouldn't like the thought of losing you if it could have potentially been prevented. And I do not...” He hesitated. "I do not think you would attack me, Barry. Perhaps I am wrong, and foolishly so, but I... I want to give you the chance to prove that I am right."

Barry's heartbeat picked up, a rush of warmth flooding his chest.

The professor nodded and took a few paces away, wiping his brow. "Oh, Barry?" He turned back. "I have made arrangements to take that trip to London. I know you wanted to go, and I have kin we can stay with while there. Besides, it’s high time we got out of the manor for awhile, don’t you agree?"

Barry perked up. "Oh yes. That sounds great!"

"Excellent. We leave tomorrow. Start packing."

Barry walked down the path through the woods. It was a warmer day than usual, with the sun chasing the bite of cold out of the atmosphere. It’s light shone smoothly through mostly-bare trees, landing in broken patterns on the forest floor. There was very little breeze to return the bite to the air. Barry enjoyed the pleasant walk, finding some childish amusement in exhaling a small plume of air with each breath. He and the professor would be staying in London for two or three weeks, so he was getting as much of the fresh air as he could before he’d be faced with the smog of the city. He wondered who it was they'd be staying with. A vampire, if Barry deduced that correctly from the use of the word “kin”. He would have to ask the professor to know for sure. Would it be one of the three he’d been introduced to before? Or someone new?

The sound of rustling yanked him from his thoughts, and he paused. It was a heavy noise, caused by something large. With uncertainty, he realized there was an accompany jangling, like metal, and a steady crunch, crunch, crunch in the dead leaves.

Footsteps?

Barry backed up, his feet moving as quickly and quietly as he could manage. He pivoted and began
to hasten back down the trail for the manor. He didn’t know who could be out here, but with the way Professor Thawne had been on edge recently, he figured it couldn’t be anyone friendly.

He crashed into a tall shape. Or he would have if he hadn't jerked back at the last second.

He stared.

It was a man. And there were more men behind him. The hairs on Barry's neck stood on end as he eyed them, tensing. At first take, they were normal enough. But on closer inspection, their appearances were...odd. The gleam of silver adornments decorated their faces, necks, wrists, hands, and lined their clothes, their buttons comprised of it. They were far too fancy for a simple walk in the woods, and even if they weren't in the woods, this was surely too odd to be a mere display of wealth.

Silver was a weapon...against vampires.

Barry couldn't help but think these might be the vampire hunters their unwelcome guest had mentioned a few nights ago. They certainly had an...air about them, an aura of confidence. They stood tall, eyes harsh and demanding. Barry then noticed the hilt of a sword on the first man's belt, and he went numb. As his eyes wandered, he could pick out more weapons, crossbows, flintlocks, daggers-

“Barry Allen?” the man before him asked without preamble.

Barry felt his eyes widen. How could they possibly know his n-

Well that wasn’t a good sign.

Barry cleared his throat, steadying his nerves. “I- Why would you think that-?”

“We heard about an investigation into a vampire in this area, lead by a man named Barry Allen. Last we heard he had moved out here, and you fit the description we were given... We are curious on what you found, Mr. Allen.”

“O-oh.” Barry said, off guard. ”W-well, I found- uh, n-nothing. There was nothing, no monster, just a lot of wishful thinking. I was absolutely foolish. I was chasing ghosts. Now if you will uh, excuse me, I must return to my home, I ha-” he started to push past them.

A hand grabbed his cravat, yanking it. Barry froze, realizing with growing dread that the man was eyeing his neck. Shit. The bite scars- “Doesn’t seem that way to me,” growled the man, frowning. “There's quite a few bitemarks on your neck... And don't lie and say it was a lover- I know a vampire bite when I see one. It appears you are helping them. Like a little pet, huh? Found an easy life with those psychopaths? Decided lying for them was better than doing the right thing?”

“No-!” Barry exclaimed, anger rising. “How dare you, sir! I’m not a-a pet!” He spluttered. "G-get your hands off me!"

“What are these, then, huh?” The man practically shook him with anger. “You think I’m stupid? Don’t lie to me! Since you are not one of them, I will assume you are either a blood servant, or are under duress. Either way, I will spare you if you show me to your master.”

Barry stared into baleful eyes, and he realized he couldn’t move, couldn’t think at all. He was frozen.

“Well?” The man pulled the silver sabre from his belt, pressing it against Barry’s neck. ”Better tell me what you know, boy, or I’ll cut your head off right here.”
A blur lunged out of the trees, crashing into the man and breaking the hold. Barry stumbled back, falling to the ground. He hit the forest floor hard, wincing as pain ran up his body. He looked up, trying to track the movements of the attacker. Was it the professor? He wondered. It was most certainly a vampire. There were crunches, screams, and the men, now wildly trying to fight, were knocked around like flies. Necks cracked and throats slashed open, spilling blood.

The vampire's blur faded, and he staggered out of the hunters' midst as the last one collapsed, gasping with exertion and sweating profusely. He fell to his hands and knees, coughing. Barry could make out blood dripping from a cut on his shoulder. It was not Professor Thawne. He didn't have the right build. He was dressed head to toe in black. After a few moments, he staggered to his feet and spat on the corpses before turning slowly.

Barry realized who it was. His heartbeat picked up, thumping against his ribs. “Hunter.”

“Ah, good...you remember me.” The vampire wiped his face, still panting. “Well...that was a mess.... They were looking...for a vampire... The professor, I suspect.” He gulped air and put space between him and presumably the silver that was affecting him.

Barry stood warily, uncertain what to do.

A grin split Hunter's face as he caught his breath. “I hope you realize I just saved your pathetic life. I went up against disgusting silver for you.”

Barry took a step back, swallowing. “I uh-” he trailed off when the man approached him. Barry remembered something and reached for his knife that he'd hidden under his coat, heart thudding. He drew the silver, holding it out.

“Oh, come on, Barry,” Hunter hissed, glaring at the weapon. “That’s not a very nice way to thank your savior. You truly are the rudest pet I’ve ever met. Someone should teach you some manners.”

“S-stay back,” Barry said. ”P-please.”

"Fortunately, I don't need all of my strength to whip a scrawny little mutt like you into shape." Hunter’s fangs slid out, and he moved forward.

Barry stumbled back, still keeping the weapon between them. "Stop, now!"

There was a shift in the air, and movement between them. The vampire was thrown back, slamming into a tree so hard, it shook. He thudded to the ground, gasping for air as if winded again.

Professor Thawne stood there between them. “Mr. Zolomon. What is truly rude here is you trying to discipline another’s pet. That is not your place.”

Looking annoyed, Hunter picked himself up, brushing off dirt. “Right. But his master wasn’t around, so I figured someone should take care of.”

“Either way... How quaint you should be here now. It’s almost as if you never left the manor the other night.”

“I was heading home when I saw them.” Hunter pointed at the corpses. “I followed them, to ensure my suspicion, that these fools were after you, Thawne. I wasn’t going to intervene, but then the pet almost got his head chopped off. I couldn’t help but think what a pity that would be, for a pet to die in any other way than by giving his blood to a vampire, to die by a filthy silver sabre. I just did your work by killing them.”
Professor Thawne stared at him for a moment, slowly deflating. "I see."

Hunter folded his arms. "I want the pet to thank me, Thawne. I put the effort into saving his life, after all."

Barry’s heart leapt. He watched the hungry eyes tracking him. He looked to the professor, noticing his eyes were widened with anger. "No. He's not your pet. How often must I say it? I am responsible for him, and so if anyone owes you, it is I... Besides, he does not share concepts of vampire gratitude."

“He should,” Hunter said with an annoyed expression. "He is a part of our world now, whether he likes it or not." His eyes gleamed. "Pets don't get to decide their own enjoyment. Their masters do."

Barry backed away, confused but the feeling coiling in his chest had his body screaming to flee quite suddenly.

Professor Thawne grabbed Hunter’s collar, getting in his face. "Even if he did share them, you are owed nothing from him when you barely respect our society as it is."

The two immortals glared at each other.

“I-” Barry started, but flinched when Hunter looked at him again with that same dark expression.

"Not now, Barry!” Professor Thawne snapped.

"Let him speak for himself, Thawne," Hunter said, grinning with his fangs out, "maybe he has learnt something here."

They stood there for a few moments in tense silence, then Professor Thawne said, "What do you have to say, Barry?"

“I... I’m willing to offer my blood as...a thanks...” He managed. He just wanted to be done with this vampire. If giving him some blood would make Hunter leave, he’d gladly do it.

For some reason, Professor Thawne looked even more antagonized. “Hunter,” he hissed like a warning.

Hunter blinked in response. “I’ll accept the mortal’s blood.” In the blink of an eye, he fell upon Barry and sank fangs into his neck. Barry howled in pain, and shock ran through his limbs. Even Professor Thawne’s first feeding hadn’t hurt like this. His eyes watered, and he shut them, fists clenching. He knew he would fall over if Hunter wasn't preventing that. He felt blood spill out of the wound, soaking into his collar. His heart beat wildly. The warm feelings he felt when Professor Thawne fed simply weren’t there. It was all agony.

“Not too much!” he heard the professor snarl close by. “I fed just a few days ago!”

It wasn’t long before Barry began to feel dizzy. Professor Thawne yanked Hunter off Barry, shoving him away. The feeling of fangs ripping out of Barry’s neck left him gasping for air. He staggered, started to fall, and the professor caught him, pulling him close, chin in his hair. Barry closed his eyes, tears welling from the intense burning that was in his neck. He gripped the professor's coat, woozy.

He heard Hunter speaking. “You’re right. It’s diluted, weak. If I take any more out of him, he might even die. Which might be amusing, but that blood...it’s worth keeping around. For awhile, at least... I would love to have it when it’s actually ready to drink. I challenge you to a duel, Eobard.”
Barry felt Professor Thawne stiffen. "A what?"

“A duel. If I win, I can take the pet for my own. It’s only fair, since I didn’t even get a decent meal out of him.”

Barry went cold.

“No!” Professor Thawne all but roared. “You will not! It is out of the question entirely!”

“Do you fear me?” Hunter challenged.

“I’d sooner fear an ant. I merely have no reason to waste my time on you because my pet will never be another’s!”

“I have been slighted! I risked my limbs to save him, and I get next to nothing in return!”

“That was a risk you took when you accepted his thanks, Hunter! You had no idea if his blood would be worth it or not!”

Barry gripped harder to the professor, breathing in his scent over the tang of blood. He could feel the warm liquid dripping from his injury. Professor Thawne would never have been so sloppy while feeding, he reflected miserably.

Hunter was speaking. “It must be nice to have another do your dirty work for you and not properly reward them.”

“That was also your decision. If you want a deal, you make it beforehand...” There was a pause. 
"...If you must, I will thank you in the standard way, but you will leave my blood servant alone forever, or so help me, Hunter, I will rip your legs off.”

There was a spitting noise. “I will not accept your thanks, Thawne. You know I’ve never been keen on being with a man!” Hunter growled. “Fine! Back down now! You’re a bloodless coward, like the majority of our kind!”

"We're done here," Professor Thawne said assertively. "You stay away for good, Zolomon."

He picked Barry up and began stalking away, his hold almost too tight. Barry felt horrible, almost sick from the scent of blood lingering in his nostrils, the movement of being carried, and the dizzying pain. He hoped he didn't vomit. He would have rather walked back, but he wasn't going to even try.

Professor Thawne all but flung Barry onto his bed. Barry almost fell over but caught himself. He felt the bed dip as the vampire climbed on next to him. His hands found Barry’s shoulders and...started massaging them? Barry was a little surprised at how gentle he was being at the moment, considering the anger radiating off him, not to mention the overall roughness in his movements. Barry shook his head, trying to clear it from the foggy feeling he was experiencing.

“What-?” Barry started, but the professor shushed him.

After a moment, Professor Thawne peeled back his bloodied collar. Barry winced, catching the angry gaze. “That sireless bastard!” Professor Thawne snarled. “This will take months to fully heal! You shouldn’t have said a fucking word to him!”

Barry cringed. “I just wanted to help—”

“Well, what’s done is done, Bartholomew. Now we all must live with the consequences of your
idiotic decision. I hope you realize that you have likely given that lowborn even more reason to hunt you. It’s fortunate I fed recently or he would have gotten a full dose of your delicious, intoxicating, undiluted blood, and I would have been too weak to pull him off when he took too much.”

Oh...

Truth was, Barry hadn’t considered that. And he knew, from the look on Thawne’s face, that the older man probably knew this much. Barry felt guilt bubbling up as he tried to ignore the throbbing pain in his neck. Just how bad was it?

Professor Thawne soon left the room with quick steps. When he returned, he was a carrying a bottle and some gauze. He dabbed a cloth to the bottle to get some liquid on it. It smelt strongly of alcohol. He dabbed it to the wound, making Barry wince again. After, the professor applied the gauze to the fresh bite, wrapping Barry’s neck. Finished, Professor Thawne handed Barry a can of fruit. “Eat this to help with the loss of blood.”

Barry began nibbling on a peach slice.

Professor Thawne began muttering under his breath, “I can only hope he will take a hint. But if I know him, he won’t. Based off what he said, he seemed interested in having more.” Professor Thawne looked Barry in the eyes, and his voice raised. “I don’t know what to do. I suppose I will have to find a way to convince him you aren’t worth the trouble, but he has a one-track mind.”

“I’m sorry,” Barry said. “I wasn’t thinking~”

"No, you weren’t. But this is a common habit of yours, I've noticed."

That didn't feel good. Barry sighed, focusing on his food.

Professor Thawne shook his head before climbing off the bed again. “The carriage is here, I was going to inform you when I instead found you being harassed by that fool. Eat that fruit and meet me downstairs after you change your clothes - that idiot made a mess of your blood. You can rest on the carriage ride... And also because you will be around another vampire, here is a cover for the ring.” He gave Barry a small piece of material with a clasp on it. “It can be quickly taken off if you face danger.” Barry nodded to show his understanding, and the immortal left the room at a brisk pace.

There was a nice carriage pulled by two black horses waiting outside. Barry wasn’t expecting to be greeted by the sight of Doctor Malcolm Merlyn standing by it, arms folded. Barry slowly made his way down the manor steps, struggling to keep his feet, lightheaded.

“Hello again, Barry Allen,” the doctor said amicably.

“Hello,” Barry managed.

“Eobard told me what happened. That Hunter is a nasty fellow. It is unfortunate you were put in that position.”

“I’m fine,” Barry said with a wince. He closed his eyes and leaned on the carriage, measuring his breaths until the dizzy spell passed. He put two and two together. “We’re...staying with you, aren't we?”

“Yes. Did the professor not tell you?”

"Not exactly... He's been...rushed."
"Ah."

Professor Thawne strode out of the manor in that exact moment, holding a suitcase. “This is the last of it.”

“How long are you intending to stay?” Malcolm asked, eyeing the luggage. "Your letter was...vague."

“As of now, I expect to stay for about two weeks...but I may extend the time if necessary. The hunters...” he trailed off. "Well, I don't know what will happen."

“I see. You are welcome to stay as long as you wish, friend.”

As the two of them went over the final plans, Barry walked around the carriage and began petting one of the horses. “Hey there, big boy.” It snorted, and Barry smiled.

The kittens came bounding around the house at full tilt. They’d gotten much larger, and crackled dead leaves in their wake as they reached Barry, purring. Barry took his time saying bye to them, squatting down and rubbing their ears while they purred and genially swatted at his hands.

"Don't worry, it won't be too long, Sweetie," he told the one he was currently scratching. She purred even harder, and Barry chuckled. Poot and Nora tumbled in a playfight nearby, distracted. He was going to miss them while they were gone. Barry glanced up to see Iris and Somnia grooming each other nearby. "You'll be alright," he muttered, and for a second, he wasn't sure who he was saying it to. The cats, or himself? A cold feeling crept down his spine. He looked past the cats, towards the woods. He couldn’t help but feel like he was being watched. This place suddenly didn't feel so safe now. He shuddered, bitterly wondering if the safety he'd felt earlier was merely an illusion, one that would soon shatter completely.

He made his way back to the two vampires, a kitten brushing against his leg as he did so.

“Finished saying your farewells to the felines?” Professor Thawne asked, the first hint of amusement creeping into his voice since the encounter with Hunter.

“Yeah. Should we set out some extra food, or-”

“I’ve already done that.”

"I- oh," Barry said as the words sunk in.

Malcolm climbed into the driver seat, and the professor opened the carriage. He offered his hand to Barry.

“What is your deal?” Barry asked, “I’m not some woman who needs helped into the cart!”

The professor tilted his head. “I figured with all that blood loss, you’d be a little lightheaded, Barry.”

Barry swallowed hard and ignored the hand, stepping up into the carriage alone. His vision dimmed, but all he said was, “I’m fine.” He willed himself to keep moving until he was seated on the opposite side.

Professor Thawne followed once he was situated, and the door shut.

“Are you ready?” Malcolm asked.

“Yes." Professor Thawne replied through the window. "Drive, please."
The seat was a little cramped, and Barry leaned over, closing his eyes, trying to get comfortable against the hard frame as the carriage started moving. He was pretty worn out at this point and just wanted to rest.

“Would you allow me to-?” Professor Thawne asked abruptly. Barry looked up, blinking, to find the intense gaze on him. “Allow you to do what?”

The vampire grabbed his arm and tugged at him, pulling him close. "To do this?" Barry was surprised to find himself pressed against the other man, head on his chest, a gloved hand stroking through his hair. "I imagine this is more comfortable?"

Barry didn’t pull away this time either, but he also chose to ignore the question. “Do you think those are the only vampire hunters in the area?” He asked instead.

Professor Thawne sighed. “That seems unlikely. They are like roaches. Where one group is, there’s always more. I am meeting with some other vampires in London to discuss the situation, since it is true that we lost one of our own to them already...”

“Oh...”

"But you shouldn't have to concern yourself with that. You'll be safe enough with both Malcolm and I to protect you. Just relax now, Barry.” There was nothing but the creak of the carriage for a minute, then the professor added, "I...apologize for what I said earlier. About you not thinking being common for you. I was...wrong. I was...angry, but that is no excuse. I was not even angry at you.”

Barry gave a grunt of acknowledgement and closed his eyes. A hand rubbed his back. He felt sleepy, but realized he also felt incredibly safe. It wasn't an illusion. He realized the safety wasn't in the manor, but rather, with the vampire. As long as Professor Thawne was around, regardless of where they were, he didn't have to be afraid. He shifted until he was more comfortable, head on the other man's shoulder, and quickly felt himself drifting off, thoughts blissfully absent from his mind for once.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I know, it's taking forever for Barry to accept his (gay) feelings. I promise it's coming. Just hang in there. XD
Arrival

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Barry stirred awake sleepily, feeling incredibly groggy and worn, not at all like he'd gotten any rest. He blinked up, eyes registering the professor he was lying against. The warmth and contact was nice. With a sigh, Barry sat up, rubbing his face.

"How do you feel?" Professor Thawne asked.

"Frankly? Terrible," Barry muttered. He touched the bandages on his neck, wincing when the wound there twinged. There was a bit of blood crusted onto the gauze, apparently having seeped out while he was sleeping. He sighed. The professor was right. It was going to be awhile before it was properly healed. He berated himself for being an idiot, exposing his neck for a vampire who obviously loved causing pain to humans.

Professor Thawne's voice broke into his thoughts. "You can rest more when we arrive at Malcolm's. And we'll change those bandages."

Barry nodded.

He became aware of a loud clamor outside. He turned his head and pulled back the cover from the window. He almost gasped. They were in London, apparently having reached one of the more densely populated sections of the city. It was noisy with loud voices, clopping hooves, and the general commotion of everyday life. The air was rank, thick and uncomfortable to breathe after being so used to the fresh air in the middle of nowhere. Still, it was magnificent. Barry leaned his head out the window, gazing at the huge buildings, the factories coughing smog, and he could see a dense fog settling amongst the buildings.

"Whoa," Barry said, "I barely remember it. It's chaotic...but incredible." He looked all around, taking in as much as he could. Finally, he pulled himself back into the carriage.

Thawne was smiling at him. Barry found himself smiling back. He chuckled and looked away again, face warming.

They arrived at Malcolm's awhile later. Their host's house wasn't nearly as spacious as the manor, but it was tidy and comfortable. There were two rooms, a kitchen and dining area, and a sitting room. Barry was a little more pleased than he expected when Malcolm let him have the spare room to himself - a guest room, as it turned out. He felt better being here in the city, he had to admit. Gone was the anxiety, the chill creeping down his spine, the feel of being watched.

"Tomorrow, I'll show you around," Professor Thawne informed him.

Barry sat his book down and wandered into the dining area, looking for Professor Thawne. He wanted to speak with him, even though he didn't have any questions or specific ideas to discuss. He just...didn't want to be alone, a feeling he couldn't exactly explain. Disappointingly, the immortal was nowhere in sight. He resigned himself to going back to his room and being bored. He didn't feel like reading anymore.

Before he could leave, though, his attention was caught by voices coming from Malcolm's room. So the professor was with Malcolm. Curiosity gripped him. It wasn't exactly polite to eavesdrop, he
thought, but he wondered what it was vampires discussed. Blood? Death? Hunters? Was it so bad to
want to know? He slipped quietly into the sitting room, and was soon only a mere few feet
from Malcolm's doorway. He crept forward until he could make out what was being said. It was a
little hard. The speaker was almost whispering.

“You should let me help you ease off some of that tension, Eobard. You've been incredibly moody
all day. I know your new pet is a handful, but—”

“It’s unnecessary.”

“Why are you being stubborn? You usually are more than ready to accept what I offer.”

“I…” There was a pause. “It would be different this time.”

“You know I don’t care what reasons you have for accepting. I haven’t cared about that in a long
time.”

"It's...complicated. Or maybe it isn't. It feels like it is."

There was a soft exhale. “I apologize. I shouldn’t persist. It is unbecoming of me. I am
just...surprised. This is very unlike you.”

“If you understood the full reasons, then...I would feel better about this. It's not that I don't want to
accept...but I almost feel obligated not to...”

“Then tell me.”

There was an even longer pause. "Eum...amo...” whispered the professor.

"I...oh, well I am hardly surprised..."

“As ridiculous as it sounds... I am simply...unsure of...how to handle this."

"Whatever you do, you must simply respect his choices."

"I know that..."

"Does he want-?"

"No."

"And you still won't accept my offer?"

"I... How about a massage for now? I think perhaps in awhile...”

"I would enjoy that."

Barry heard the rustle of cloth and a soft groan. It sounded like the professor's voice. Barry thoughts
briefly flashed to the night Professor Thawne had kissed him, recalling the moan he'd given. It was
similar. Barry felt his stomach knot, and a pang of emotion went through his chest. He shook
himself, frowning. He really shouldn't be listening in, so he drifted back to his room. Barry was
confused as he sat down. He was annoyed by the implication he seemed to have caused Professor
Thawne a large amount stress - enough for Malcolm to notice. Why wasn't he blaming Hunter? Or
the actual vampire hunters?

Besides, Barry was the one who had to put up with hungry, ruthless immortals who saw him as little
more than dinner. If anyone deserved to have stress relief, it was him.

He snorted. Perhaps that was a somewhat pretentious thought.

He decided he would just try to get some extra sleep. He undressed and lay down, ignoring the fresh weight in his chest.

When Barry left his room the following morning, he almost ran into Professor Thawne.

"Barry!"

Barry blinked tiredly, gazing into the man's unusually cheery face. "Huh-?" Was all he could think to utter.

"Get dressed. There's somewhere we need to visit."

"But... What about breakfast?"

"Don't worry. You'll be eating soon enough."

"Oh... okay...?" Barry turned and went back into his room, changing out of his night clothes. He splashed his face in the water basin, trying to wake up. He wiped off the water, shook his head, and left the room again.

The professor was waiting by the door. "Excellent. Put on your coat and scarf. It's quite chilly out."

They left. Professor Thawne was right. It was quite chilly, the air biting and pluming with every inhale and exhale. Barry was strangely happy, though, an eagerness settling in his chest as they walked down the streets that were just coming alive with morning activity. It was nice, he decided, to be exploring this grand city. Professor Thawne kept to the shadows, which wasn't hard. Most of the direct sunlight was blocked by the buildings.

"You are going to love the place I have in mind, Barry."

"Am I?"

"Oh yes. For some reason when I recalled it, all I could think about was how much you would enjoy it."

"You won't tell me what it is?"

"You'll see soon enough. I want it to be a surprise." His eyes were twinkling when he said it. After that, the immortal began humming.

Barry glanced sidelong at the vampire, wondering what had put him in such a remarkably good mood. It was starting to feel infectious. Barry found himself smiling.

"Ah, here we are," the professor said not long after.

Barry looked at the sign to see what... Oh, it was a bakery. Barry probably could've predicted that much if he'd put the effort into thinking about it. He followed the professor into the store. His mouth instantly began watering as the succulent, enticing aroma of various breads and sweets filled his nose. His stomach growled against his will. Professor Thawne raised his eyebrows at him, and Barry chuckled with embarrassment.
"Ah, good morning, Professor," the man at the counter greeted in an accent. "It has been some time."

"Indeed, Daniel, it's good to see you."

"Same to you, Professor. Are you well?"

"Very. And you?"

"Ah, just business as usual. But I've been in good health." The man adjusted one of the displays of bread, rearranging the loaves. "What can I do for you and your friend on this fine day? Perhaps you wish to purchase a fresh French style loaf?"

"Not at the moment, no... Say, you wouldn't happen to have some of those powdered Danish, would you?"

The man finished his arranging and smiled knowingly. "Ah, I do, I do! Made some just under an hour ago. How many would you like?"

"Two. With the cherry topping."

"Coming right up, sir."

When they received the two Danish wrapped in paper, Thawne said his goodbyes and they were soon back out on the street. He handed one to Barry. "Try it!" He sounded so eager, that Barry accepted it without question despite the odd location to eat in.

The Danish itself was very inviting in appearance, large and fluffy. Barry studied the fine white dusting on the treat. "Is it flour?"

"What? No. It's sugar. Ground into a dust. Delicious. Try it." Barry realized the professor's eyes were locked on him intently.

Barry bit into the treat, and his tongue instantly tingled. It was a lot sweeter than he could have expected. He chewed it thoroughly, saliva pooling thickly in his mouth. He swallowed.

"What do you think?"

"Wow, it’s really sweet. And rich. It’s very good."

"I thought so too," The vampire said with a grin as he bit into his own Danish. Barry found himself tracking the way his teeth sank into the soft treat. "I knew you would appreciate it," Professor Thawne continued. "Come on, lets find somewhere less odd to finish these."

They walked down the street to a small empty area on the corner. They finished up, and the professor chuckled. "You have sugar all over your face."

"I do?" Barry asked with dismay.

"It’s ado-" He stopped. "It’s everywhere. There's even some on your scarf!"

Barry pulled out his handkerchief. Or tried to. His pocket was empty. "Oh, I forgot my-"

"Here," Professor Thawne handed him his own.

Barry wiped his face off, then brushed at his scarf. It did not do as much good as he hoped. The white specks smeared across the fabric, but Barry did the best he could. "Is that good?" He asked
after a minute.

“You missed a bit.”

“Where?”

“On your cheek,” he pointed.

"There?" Barry asked, rubbing at it with the cloth.

"Just- Here, I’Il get it.” The professor grabbed the handkerchief and wiped Barry's face. Then, he brushed more on Barry's scarf with his glove. “That will have to do. You are messy.”

It was that moment that Barry realized the professor wasn’t in the same predicament with the sugar. He sighed. How had the man not gotten the powder everywhere? It wasn't like it stayed on the treat very well.

They went to a few more shops after that. Their first stop was a tailor - where Thawne had Barry measured for two new outfits. Then next was a museum, and it was quite remarkable. Barry stopped almost every two steps to gawk at something different. To the professor's credit, he was quite patient whenever Barry wanted to linger on something. It was around the time they were finishing up, that Barry's stomach started feeling sore. They came to the conclusion it was probably the sugary, greasy treat and that some lunch would help, and so, they went to a nice diner to eat. Their last stop was a theater, where they watched a Shakespeare play.

As the sun was setting, they strode across a bridge over the river Thames on their way back to Malcolm's. Barry stopped and went to the edge, leaning on the guard, gazing out at steamboats drifting up and down the murky, almost black waters.

“It’s dirty, isn’t it? London?” Professor Thawne asked, coming to stand beside him and looking out. "Disgusting even."

“You aren't wrong..." Barry's gaze drifted to what he could see of the setting sun between the break in buildings on the river. "But it has charm. So many people, just living their lives...” Barry smiled a little. “I stood on a bridge like this one last time. I was with my dad. Coming here...it was one the most fun times I remembered having while growing up.”

Professor Thawne didn't answer for awhile. When he did, he met Barry's eyes. There was a strange softness to his gaze. “You like the city, do you, Barry?”

“Yes," Barry admitted plainly. "I know that probably seems odd to you, and I agree it's messy here. And chaotic. But...there is also opportunity. And so many interesting places."

"I can see that, though I will always prefer my manor in the woods." The professor shifted a little closer. “Would you...live here, if you could?”

Barry looked back out. “I don’t know. Possibly.”

“What profession would you enter?”

Barry paused in thought. “Well, I don’t know. I’m not practiced enough to be a doctor any more. It might be interesting being a detective working for Scotland Yard. Or perhaps a quiet life working in a grand library or at a university." He shrugged. "But I am sure most of those professions are just a fantasy. Not like I could get hired in a place like this."
"I see."

"Why are you even asking?" Barry frowned. "You know those are not options for me."

"I was simply curious." Professor Thawne pulled back from the view. "Let’s be on our way. There is one last store you might like. A bookstore, if they haven't closed yet."

Barry perked up. "Definitely."

As they entered the bookstore, Barry took a deep breath full of the scent of parchment. He was reminded of the professor's library. Of course, he knew the books here would be quite different, but the scent, it was the same. And Barry loved it, found it soothing. The owner greeted them shortly, seeming busy. He announced that he was closing soon, so not to linger too long. Then he went down an aisle of books, disappearing from view.

Barry found himself drawn to the books on science. Tracing the section with a finger and reading the titles, he eventually grabbed an astrology book, gently opening it. It reminded him of some of the professor's notes in the library on stars. A drawn constellation brought his mind back to the night he and the professor had sat beneath the stars, gazing up at them. He sighed, a strange sense of wistfulness entering his chest.

"Barry, you should see this," Professor Thawne said. His tone was amused.

Barry returned the book he was holding back to its place on the shelf and went to the vampire's side. He felt his eyes widen at the cover of the tome the vampire held. "It couldn’t be, could it?" He muttered. "It is!"

“What?"

“I know that book! It's the book my father got me when I was a kid - the one about mythological creatures. I can’t believe I’m seeing a copy of it again!” His tone dropped. "I sold my last one."

“Mythology.” The professor reopened it. He also got quieter, glancing around for the owner. The man was on the other side of the shop, talking to someone. Barry and the professor returned to the book, with Thawne muttering, “Well, the author clearly never knew vampires were real. This is all nonsense. It’s no wonder you knew nothing of my kind when you grew up with this. That you thought of us all as demons.”

"Well, most people don't think vampires exist."

"Then why put effort into creating lies about a fictional subject. I doubt these sold very well."

"On the contrary, people love stuff like this."

Professor Thawne squinted at the pages. "What is this? I don't know anyone who will steal children away to feed on them. It's just irrational when their parents have much more blood. Let the children grow up and they will have more blood. Do butchers slaughter week old calves for meat if it's unnecessary?"

Barry shrugged, frowning.

"It says we burst into flames in the holy daylight?" He snorted. "Yes, we are more sensitive to the light, but bursting into flames is quite impossible. You might get a bad burn, but those heal quickly in the shadows or simply being out of direct sunlight." He looked at Barry. "I can't believe you believed this."
"Give me a break, I was a *kid.*"

"Though some things stuck into adulthood, yes? Hm. Vampires are corpses inhabited by demons? Ah, I remember you spewing that nonsense at me, Barry..."

Barry's face was very hot and tingly quite suddenly.

More pages turned. "Vampires hate being around other vampires? Hah, that's the most amusing thing in this book so far. We vampires would live together in larger groups if it weren't so dangerous... Vampires are unable of forming true, lasting bonds? This author should meet Kendra and Carter... Or Sara and whatever pets she's taking care of this decade. She continues to love them deeply despite knowing most of them will pass away eventually... Though I imagine the fool who wrote this would likely not survive an encounter with Sara."

"Who are Kendra and Carter?" Barry asked.

"They're rather famous among my kind... I haven't spoken to them in quite some time, I wonder how they are doing? Ah, well, the reason for their fame is that Carter was killed by hunters. Or so everyone thought. Centuries passed, and Kendra mourned her husband-"

"Wait a second. Some vampires aren't interested in sodomy?"

Professor Thawne snorted. "Indeed. We are diverse, too, Barry... Hm, if I recall correctly, I believe those two were married before they were turned. It's unusual for a turned human couple to have one sire, but they obviously convinced someone that their love should be eternal - literally."

"Sorry, please continue."

"After centuries of believing her husband was dead - and taking no other lovers - she was rewarded with Carter returning to her."

"Did he say what happened?"

"Yes. Apparently, he got stranded overseas after being captured by hunters and dragged off for punishment. Not all hunters kill vampires immediately. Some want to torture and have fun with them first." His face twisted for a moment. "Carter was fortunate enough to escape them before they killed him. And it wasn't until humans started populating the Americas more thoroughly, that he was able to get a ship back undetected. A ship back to his love."

Barry felt warmed. "That's sweet."

"It's an improvement if you're moved by a vampire tale of romance."

“Yeah... I suppose so." Barry fidgeted and cleared his throat. "That book got a lot wrong...and so did I. I know you aren't demons...” He looked at the other books, not seeing them. “I sometimes wonder what else I’ve gotten wrong."

The professor patted his back. “Now you are thinking like a scientist, Barry - objectively. That's all I've been trying to encourage you to do.”

Barry's face burned even more.

Thawne closed the book, staring at the cover. “I will buy it for you.”

“What? Why?”
“So you can remember how far you've come,” replied the immortal with a wink.

Barry was oddly grateful for it as he followed the vampire up to the counter, and watched him purchase the silly book. He felt very cheerful as he carried it back to Malcolm's. They paused on the doorstep to the house.

"Thank you," Barry said. "I really enjoyed today."

"I told you I would do anything for your happiness, Barry." Professor Thawne stared intensely into Barry's eyes. "But the truth is, you are not the only one who very much enjoyed today."

Barry was practically floating as they walked inside.

Chapter End Notes

Translation-
"Eum...amo..." - "I..love him."
Barry walked out of his room to a flurry of activity. Professor Thawne and Malcolm were busying about, collecting things, pulling on boots, hats and coats, rummaging in drawers. Barry had to stop and rub his eyes before focusing again. Their outfits were especially fancy. Professor Thawne had on a magnificent, dark cape with an embroidered gold crest that meant absolutely nothing to him, but, wow, it was gorgeous. Barry had never seen it before. What did it mean? Did vampires have family crests?

Why did he feel so funny and warm now?

Malcolm and Professor Thawne stopped at a drawer, pouring over a folder together. Neither of them seemed to have noticed Barry's entrance yet.

"I think that's everything," Malcolm said to Professor Thawne. He closed the folder.

Barry found his voice. “What’s...going on?”

The two vampires turned to him. Barry noticed the same crest stitched onto Malcolm's coat pocket. Professor Thawne smiled. He found it difficult not to stare at the professor, for some reason.

Professor Thawne spoke. “We are going to meet with other vampires about the hunter situation. We should be back before the dawn.”

“Wait, you’ll be all night?”

“Not likely, but it is a possibility.”

“It’s still a few hours until sunset,” Barry pointed out. "And it looks like you're about to leave now."

“Our meetings can be...lengthy. Vampires don't gather a lot, so when we do, we like to make it worthwhile.”

Barry wondered what a bunch of immortals discussed. The latest happenings of the century? The weather? Blood? And why did they have to be so fancy to discuss it? If he didn't know better, he'd think they were attending an evening gala or ball. He pushed his musings away, because the more he thought about it, the more he found he liked the idea of having some time to himself while here. He could check up on something he'd been meaning to ever since they'd arrived. "I understand," he said.

"Good."

It wasn’t long before the two vampires were by the door, prepared to leave.

"Have fun-" Barry started, about to turn away.

Professor Thawne beckoned him. "I want to speak with you before I depart."

Malcolm went on outside as Barry walked over. "Yes?"

“Barry,” Professor Thawne said in a serious voice. "It would be best if you didn’t open this door for anyone.”
Barry found himself frowning, an anxious feeling growing at the look on the vampire's face. “You think that Hunter is here?” He blurted. He supposed it would be possible for Hunter to follow the carriage unseen, unheard, but surely the two vampires' presence was a deterrent for him trying anything while in London, especially in a busy place where people would hear any commotion easily enough.

“It could be anyone,” Professor Thawne replied, "and Malcolm is not expecting guests... But yes, I would not put it past that idiot to follow us here. Don't forget to keep your silver close, and snuff out all the lights when night falls. Well, you can keep a candle for reading, but keep its light hidden as best you can..."

At least he had the silver. Barry doubted a locked door would be enough to stop a determined vampire. "I'm not getting any sleep tonight, am I?" he muttered.

Professor Thawne put a hand on Barry’s shoulder. “I don't like this...but I have little choice. I have to go because I'm directly involved with the issue, and so is Malcolm... Stay safe. I'll return as soon as possible.”

Barry nodded. “See you.”

The professor strode outside and shut the door firmly behind him.

Barry looked out the window, watching as the two disappeared from view. When he couldn't see them anymore, he sat on the couch and waited for several minutes to ensure that neither vampire would return, trying to quell some of the fresh anxiety he felt. When the two vampires didn't return, he paced back over to the door. With caution, he peered outside, gaze going up and down the street. He saw nothing but unfamiliar faces going about their business.

No vampire would attack him in daylight on a busy street, he reassured himself. All he had to do was stay out of the shadows. Besides, he had his silver. Taking a deep breath, he went outside and made his way down the street.

Barry entered the building and crossed to the counter.

“Hello, is Mr. Queen here?” he asked.

“He is. Do you have an appointment?”

“Um... No, but-”

“If you don’t then you will have to make one-”

“Just tell him Barry’s here, please.”

“Fine, but if he says no, then you either have to make an appointment or leave.”

“Agreed.”

The receptionist walked off. A few minutes later, a man appeared out of a side room. He had blonde hair and a faint scruff, and Barry felt instant joy fill him at the sight of him. The man stopped short upon seeing Barry, eyes widening. “Barry!”

“Oliver!”

Oliver came over quickly and shook his hand vigorously. “It's great to see you!”
"It's great to see you too!"

"You're looking surprisingly well," Oliver commented, looking Barry up and down. "Better than well."

"You got me," Barry said with a gesture, grinning. "I'm doing pretty good."

"Well, well, I could hardly believe my ears. How did you make it all the way to London? Something to do with those nice clothes? Got a decent job finally?"

"You....could say that," Barry replied, stopping Oliver's barrage of questions. "It's a long story, but I knew I had to get here after that last letter you sent."

"Barry..." Oliver's face fell. He folded his arms. Barry felt his own excitement draining away. "I'm sorry... You're not going to like this."

"What?" Barry frowned. "Just tell me what you found."

"She’s...well..." He reached into his vest pocket and pulled out a paper. He put it on the desk and wrote on it. He then handed the paper to Barry. "This is the address... But...you won’t like what you find there."

"Is she...alright?"

"I believe so, but..." He sighed. "You probably should see for yourself."

Barry felt a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. "But..." He swallowed. He needed to know, but at the same time, he didn't want to hear it. And he wasn't sure he would believe it without seeing whatever it was anyway.

"Just keep in mind that...things change," Oliver said. "Which is obvious just by looking at us here."

Barry grunted in acknowledgement. He had a good idea what Oliver meant, had always suspected this would happen, but... Well, some small, optimistic part of him had hoped... Still, he had to be sure of this. Oliver was right. It was probably better if he saw, because if he didn't, some part of him might still believe things could change for him.

"Sorry, I can’t stay for long, Barr. I’ve got an appointment."

"That's okay. I can't either."

"If you want to come by the house for dinner sometime, you'd be more than welcome. My address is on this card." Oliver offered it. Barry took it. Oliver gave him a sympathetic smile before saying farewell and walking away.

Barry walked as calmly as he could manage to the address, his stomach aching slightly and his nerves tingling. As he stood outside the door with the matching numbers to those on the paper, he hesitated. He hadn't realized how hard this was going to be, but now that he was here... He chewed on the inside of his cheek. Well. He couldn't give up now. Forcing his feet forward, he walked up the steps of the house. It looked nice enough, which probably confirmed all of his sinking suspicions. Iris and her father had never been wealthy...

Professor Thawne might have thought of him as an idiot, and the fact he was here now likely confirmed such a belief, but he still had to know for sure. Barry steeled himself and knocked.
“Coming!” A voice said from within. It was feminine. Barry held his breath, hands crossed behind his back.

The door opened.

The woman standing just beyond it stared at him.

Barry stared at her.

She gaped. “Oh my god,” she exclaimed. “It’s you.”

“Good evening, Iris,” Barry said, heart racing. He shifted, hands fidgeting together. "It's...been some time."

“I- ahem, wow, I wasn’t expecting this.”

“Yeah... I know this is sudden, and I should have written first, but I couldn't wait that long. I only have a small time frame to visit in.”

“N-no... It's fine... W...would you like to come in?”

Barry fought down his nerves. “Yes...please...”

She moved aside so he could step in. The house was well-kept and nice. It was neither fancy nor poor, decorated with trimmed plants and tidy, eye-pleasing furnishings. Barry looked around, half expecting Iris's angry father to materialize from some dark corner to yell at him. Fortunately no such thing happened, and he was soon seated at a table unharmed.

“You want something to drink? Tea, perhaps?” Iris offered, gnawing on her lip.

“Ah, no. I'm good.”

Iris also sat down, albeit uncertainly. “How...how have you been?”

“It’s been...rough, but things have gotten better recently.”

She gave a nod. “You look well off.”

“I...got a job. Of sorts.”

They sat in silence for a moment.

“Iris-”

“Barry, you should know I’m married now.”

He froze as she held up her hand, showing a gold ring. Words stuck in his throat, and he could only stare. Of course, he'd suspected this ever since Oliver had apologized for his information- No, he'd suspected before then. Very few women weren't married by Iris's age, and there was no reason for her to wait on him when they hadn't been in contact, when her father would never approve of it.

“I'm also pregnant.” She put her hand on her abdomen.

Barry nodded dumbly. “Oh. Congratulations,” he said automatically. He forced himself to meet her gaze.
“I’m sorry, Barry, I should have written to tell you where I’d gone, but...it felt impossible. Besides, if my father had found out.”

“No... I understand,” Barry said. “I...what happened? Why did you vanish?” He tried to hold back his hurt from the question. He knew it wasn’t her fault.

Iris sighed, a hint of nostalgia in her eyes. “My father had us move out of the country. We went to the Americas... While there, I met Edward Thawne.”

“Thawne?” Barry interrupted. How was that even possible? That Iris’s husband had the same last name as the vampire he now served? Was it a coincidence? Or something else?

“Yeah. You know that name?”

“N-no. It’s just odd- an odd name.”

“Anyway, I fell in love with Eddie...He was from London, so...we moved back and got married. He’s a good man, Barry, and he takes care of me.”

And this Eddie apparently had a good, steady career, Barry thought. He felt suffocated, some part of him deprived. All because of his means, he had lost this. He would have given this to her - a home, a family - he would have, if he could’ve.

It was better this way, he reflected. He was sure this Edward Thawne made a better husband than he ever could. What good husband had such impure thoughts as him, after all?

Barry found himself pulling on a smile, ignoring the pain once again. “I’m glad...you’re happy, Iris. I really am. I’m glad your future is secure. That’s all I want for you.”

She smiled. “You always did have a good heart.” The smile fell, and her eyes went to his hands on the table. “Barry... You aren’t married... You weren’t...waiting for me, were you?” Her eyes looked pitying.

“I...” Barry felt himself frowning. The last thing he wanted was pity. “If I’d found someone, it might’ve been different, I probably would have married them because I figured you and I could never be... Not after all this time, but, I didn’t find anyone.” He cleared his throat. “I should probably get going before it gets too dark.”

He stood and walked to the door. He could hear Iris following.

He was on the bottom step outside when he heard her say, “Barry.”

He turned back to her earnest gaze. It was so hard to face the fact she’d moved on while some part of him had remained stuck in the past. “Yes?” he asked.

“I want you to be happy, too. Promise me you’ll find someone else who makes you as happy as Eddie makes me. Please.”

Barry forced himself to smile once more. “I will, Iris.”

“Goodbye, Barry.”

“Farewell.”

Barry walked away. Some part of him couldn't help but think he was walking away from the last chance he had at a normal life. But he wasn't walking away from it, because he'd lost that chance
long ago. He pulled his coat tighter around him, chilling. He half wondered if Malcolm had any alcohol stashed away somewhere back at the house - the kind that was safe for humans. He was a doctor, surely he had some somewhere.

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Barry dragged his heels back to the house, no motivation in his stride. It was almost dark when he finally arrived. He stepped inside, shutting and locking the door behind him. He trailed forward, lifting his eyes, and froze at what he saw.

Professor Thawne was glaring at him, still dressed up in that damned, fancy attire.

*Great. Of course. Just what I need.* Barry pinched the bridge of his nose. *Why is he here?*

“Where have you been?” Professor Thawne asked, clearly agitated.

Barry sighed, just wanting to be alone in his misery. “Can we discuss this later? I’m not in the mood.”

The professor glared even harder, if possible. “No. We cannot discuss this later.”

“Don’t you have a clandestine vampire meeting to attend?” Barry asked. "I would almost think you didn't leave for it all if I hadn't seen you do so myself!"

“I came back for something and found you gone.”

“What? I’m not allowed to go out now?”

“Goddamnit, Allen,” Professor Thawne growled, "you know how dangerous that could be!"

"What vampire is going to attack me in broad daylight on a busy street!?” Barry asked, throwing his arms up.

"It is almost dark now!"

"I didn't get attacked, now did I?"

"If you would have informed me, I would have not been shocked to find you missing."

“You mean if I'd gotten your permission!” Barry snapped, jabbing a finger forward. “Well guess what? I’m not your slave, so I don’t need it.”

“Barry-”

“You may think I’m your pet, your dinner, but you don’t own me and you *never will!*”

“Barry, I know that.”

“Then leave me alone,” Barry huffed, pushing past him. "Go to your vampire ball or whatever the hell it is.”

“Barry, you stubborn fool! You absolute, careless buffoon!” Professor Thawne snapped, causing Barry to turn to him. The professor’s fists were clenched, body stiff with anger. His fangs slipped out. “I was *worried sick* about you!” He hissed.

Barry blinked, feeling himself go still.
Professor Thawne's tension faded, and he rubbed his temples. "So...please, Barry, just tell me what is wrong. Why did you leave? Where have you been?" His hands dropped, and he approached Barry with them open. He paused mere inches away. "I'm not asking this because I think I own you... I'm asking this because...because I care about you. Not just your blood. I can't... I can't... lose you, not over something so foolish."

Professor Thawne’s expression was so earnest, Barry could only stare in shock. No words came to him. Of course, the vampire had been very protective lately, but to believe he honest to god cared-

“Fine,” Professor Thawne sighed, expression defeated. “Just...promise me you won’t leave again tonight. Please. I can’t leave here thinking you might get caught by hunters or that disgusting creature Zol-”

"How?" Barry finally asked.

"How what?"

"How can you care about me? You've known me for such a short time, and I obviously annoy you so much, and I'm a mortal..." He struggled with the strangest urge to start crying. "How can you care?"

"I...don't know, truthfully," Professor Thawne murmured. "Does there have to be a reason? Maybe there isn't one."

"It doesn't make sense."

The professor gave a rough laugh. "Feelings rarely do, now do they? Hell, Barry, life itself almost never makes sense."

Barry looked away. "That is...true, I suppose..." A long pause occurred, and Barry found himself wondering if he should tell Professor Thawne what had happened. He found that he wanted to, half wondered if the professor might offer some soft words or a comforting hug in response. Barry decided he would tell him. "I...I went to an old friend for information on... On Iris."

Professor Thawne’s expression instantly morphed into utterly unreadable. Barry's stomach knotted suddenly. "You did...?" the professor asked in a neutral voice. "And?"

“And she’s married now...and with child... It doesn’t matter. I wouldn't have been a good husband for her, anyway, even if we had managed to...” Barry trailed off, rubbing his eyes. "It doesn't matter," he repeated. "...I didn’t mean to worry you, Professor. I'm sorry. I just didn't say anything about this because I thought...you...wouldn’t understand... That you wouldn't approve of me foolishly hoping that maybe life would throw me a bone.

“Barry...” Professor Thawne said, voice soft. "I think...I finally do understand now."

Barry shivered at the strange tone with which those words were said. Why was the professor being so weird about this? This was hardly the response he'd hoped for. “I won’t go anywhere else tonight, okay? I promise. I don’t have any reason to.”

Their eyes met again, and Barry was surprised by how blank the vampire's features were. “As long as you promise,” he said in an almost business-like tone. "Well, I should really be getting back to the meeting before I miss something important."

Barry gave a sound of agreement and went to his room, listening to the sound of the professor leaving. He sat on the bed and opened the ridiculous mythology book, gazing at the distorted
creatures on its pages in the last bit of fading light seeping in through the window. They looked disgusting. Emaciated with waxy flesh. They were supposed to be vampires. But Barry had yet to see any vampire that looked like that.

Professor Thawne looked many things, he thought - dangerous, terrifying, proud. Disgusting was not one of them. Barry knew how soft his skin was, how comforting his presence could be. Barry half wished he could have hugged him before he left.

He shut the book and rolled over, trying to think of anything besides what had happened today.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, but I had to tie up the loose end that was Barry missing Iris. The boi is a big bisexual disaster who can't see what's right in front of him (Eo, of course)... *facepalm*

Also these chapters are a lot easier to finish when they're shorter. I think I'm gonna stick to shorter chapters for awhile :)

Heyooo it's me, long time no see, y'all! :D Sorry it's been forever, but I got busy, then lost motivation, then got into another fandom for a bit. Still there, but hopefully I can keep this fic going too!
Hope you all had happy holidays, and please accept this as a late gift! :D

If Barry didn’t know better, he’d think Professor Thawne was ignoring him. A week had passed, becoming two, and Professor Thawne always seemed preoccupied with something when Barry tried to get his attention. The professor had left a few times, only mentioning “other vampires” or “don’t worry about it” when Barry tried to inquire as to why. The lack of interaction with the professor somehow only added to the heavy feeling that had been growing in his chest since he’d seen Iris.

Barry hadn’t had much to do but read or stagnate in boredom. The professor hadn’t explicitly forbidden him from exploring on his own again, but Barry hadn’t been overly confident in his own safety to do so. Still, Barry had managed to visit Oliver a few times. Those visits had lifted the fresh weight from his chest, but he’d only been able to stay there for so long before he’d had to return to Malcolm’s.

As for Malcolm - the vampire doctor was often too busy with his practice to visit with him, and Barry didn’t have much reason to interact with the vampire anyway. Though they were on friendly terms, they were not friends. However, Barry had gotten to watch him work a few times after mentioning his father had been a doctor, but that was the extent of their interactions. He’d enjoyed those moments in a way. They’d reminded him of when he used to watch his father at his own practice. And at least he hadn’t been alone in those moments.

But Barry still had a lot of alone time. Even now, he was lying on his bed, slowly digesting breakfast with his book sat aside. He felt slightly resentful of the professor’s aloofness, but he told himself that it was unfair of him to be upset over such a petty thing. Why should he be, anyway? It wasn't like he really wanted to spend copious amounts of time with the professor.

Right?

The door to his room flew open. Barry scrambled into a sitting position, alarmed. He settled when he registered the intruder as Professor Thawne.

“Barry, come with me.”

Barry was confused. “Where to?”

The professor sighed. “Just come on.” His voice was impatient.

He followed the professor outside, trying not to hope that they might be about to visit somewhere interesting. However, that hope soon faded when the vampire continued to wave off his subsequent questions until Barry fell into silence. They went down several streets in the mess that was London, before arriving at a nice, small, blue house.
“Hello, Professor Thawne,” the man at the door answered. “It is good to see you again.”

“Thank you. May I have the tour again, with my friend here.”

“Of course.” The man gestured with a large smile.

Barry was curious what this was. As soon as they stepped inside, the man began giving them a tour of the house. It was a nice house with two rooms, one with a bed in it, the other with a kitchen and dining area. It was somewhat similar to Malcolm’s, if a bit smaller.

When they reached the end of the decidedly short tour, Professor Thawne turned to him, “do you like it?”

“Um…sure. It’s a nice house,” Barry said, uncertainty, “but what is this all about?” A creeping suspicion crawled up his spine. Was the professor…?

“This is yours if you want it,” Professor Thawne confirmed with an even voice.


“I will get back to you, sir.” Professor Thawne told the man, who was staring at Barry with narrowed eyes.

“Don’t take too long, sir,” said the man, a bit of impatience entering his voice, "I have had others looking into this deal, and they’d be just as happy to take it!"

Barry and the vampire walked outside, taking a few steps down the path until they reached the walkway by the street.

“What the hell?” Barry asked. His anger at fist being avoided for weeks, and now this, was reaching a boiling point. “You’re trying to get rid of me now? We had a deal! I give you my blood and you don’t kill people! You had no right to spring this on me!”

“Barry.” The professor sighed, gazing at him with something almost haunting in his expression. “I know...this isn’t the life you wanted, being a blood servant. I know you wanted a normal life. I can give that to you now. You can start fresh here, find a wife, get a job, be successful, have a family, let the scars on your neck heal. You’ll never have to worry about vampires again. Malcolm is willing to let you learn at his practice. And if not, I pulled a few strings with a friend. I can get you on at a local library. They pay decently. You’ll never go hungry again.”

Barry could only stare for several more moments as his mind went blank. A single thought made it's way to the surface. “But if I leave, you’ll go back to hunting!”

“That is an inevitability, Barry. Surely even you realize this. Whether it’s now or in fifty years, it doesn’t really matter. A time will come when you can no longer offer your blood to me. I… I simply want the best for you, in the meantime. You have a right to this life, Barry.”

Barry shifted, seething. The professor was right. He could keep giving his blood to the vampire, but the immortal would eventually outlive him. Besides, there were other vampires, hunting, thriving off blood. Who had he been kidding when he thought satiating one vampire made any difference?

Barry looked at the ground, that heavy feeling back and more intense. *This could be my last chance for a normal life.*

Why wasn’t he leaping for it?
Why did it feel wrong?

Why was everything so confusing right now?

“Well?” The professor asked.

Barry swallowed. Hard. He forced his voice to stay calm. “Just...just let me think on it for awhile, please.”

The Professor spoke in a flat tone. “I understand. You’ll have a few days to decide. Then, I will be leaving for the manor. Besides, I doubt that fool will wait much longer.” the professor jerked a thumb back over his shoulder at the house. He must've meant their tour guide. “Come on. Let us return to Malcolm’s.”

Barry nodded.

“Can I talk to you, Professor?” Barry asked when they were back at Malcolm’s. “Alone?”

“Barry-” The professor started.

“No, please, don’t say this isn’t a good time. You must think I’m really stupid if you truly believe I haven't realized you’ve been avoiding me these past two weeks. Is this about the time I went to visit Iris? I'm not going to do it again!”

The professor ran a hand over his face, expression morphing into defeat. “No, Barry. I don’t think you’re stupid. This is just...difficult.”

“How?”

“Let’s talk in your room.”

Barry agreed, and they went to the guest room, shutting the door firmly behind them. Barry faced the professor. “How is this difficult for you?”

“I had assumed I would have...your blood for much longer. It’s hard for a vampire to willingly give away a good source.”

Of course. Barry's tone was dry when he responded, “I see. Yes, that must be very hard on you, given the inevitability of it.”

“Barry-” the professor started.

“Forget it.” Barry turned away, gripping his own hair with frustration. He couldn’t understand why there was something in him that was absolutely screaming.

“No, you’re right. I’m so used to deflecting… The truth is, I don’t want you to leave because, as I said before, I've come to care about you. A great deal. It's likely, we will not be seeing each other again if you accept... I didn’t want my emotions to influence your decision. However...you deserve honesty.”

I see.” Barry frowned and took a few steps away, before he finally looked back at the vampire. “Why are you leaving so soon, anyway?”

“The hunters have been all but purged. The danger they presented at the manor has passed. The remaining ones are closer to the city.”
“Oh... That doesn’t sound good.”

Professor Thawne exhaled. “That is why I plan on leaving soon. Vampires blend in better the further out we spread. I don’t want to draw attention to Malcolm.” For a long moment, silence filled the space between them.

Barry's mouth moved before he even gave it permission to. “Do...do you want some of my blood?”

Professor Thawne looked confused. “It isn’t time to feed.”

Barry shrugged. “I know...It’s just. I remember how you took some blood before...when those vampires came that night. You said you would take some blood to make you stronger. You can do that now... With the hunters around... I want you to...be safe.”

The professor tilted his head. “Do you?”

“Yes.”

Professor Thawne nodded. “Alright. I’ll take some of your blood, Barry.”

Barry didn't wait to be asked. He sat on the bed, scooting back, trying to slow his breathing and relax. He lay back, resting his head on the pillow. He met the professor’s keen eyes. Strangely enough, the usual trace amounts of fear, the anxiety, the feeling of vulnerability that took a hold of him in moments like this washed away. There was nothing but him and Professor Thawne.

A smile curved Professor Thawne's lips, but it was not smug or superior. It was soft, encouraging. Almost against his will, Barry felt himself smile back.

There were no words spoken. The vampire crawled onto the bed and covered him, pressing cool lips against his neck. Barry’s eyes closed, a heat growing inside at the cool touch. It spread up into his cheeks, and his heart stuttered slightly. Teeth - not sharp fangs - nibbled gently against his skin, a bite not meant to break through. A sigh drifted from his mouth. It was almost relaxing. Professor Thawne pulled back. Barry opened his eyes, and their gazes met.

Barry didn’t know why, but he felt like the eyes were asking him something. Barry...wasn't sure what they were asking. He wasn't sure of a lot of things, like what he was feeling now, or what he wanted, or what he saw for his future.

He didn't want to think about any of it now. He just wanted his mind to be blank for once, completely and blissfully blank.

Professor Thawne moved to the other side of his neck, gently caressing it with his mouth, and at the slightly painful twinge he felt, it occurred to Barry the professor was touching the partially healed mark left by Hunter. There was a gentle nibble followed by a sharp pinch. Barry gasped, wincing. He realized the sharper discomfort was the professor's fangs piercing his skin there. But...the pain wasn't unwelcome. It felt like...like the professor was reclaiming his neck, after what Hunter had done.

Barry bit his lip, fighting a groan in his throat. He realized he couldn’t stop himself from enjoying this, from wanting it. It wasn’t a choice, had never been.

_I just..._

Thawne sucked gently for a few moments, before drawing back, lips darker with blood. “Your
blood is a gift, Barry. A gift few deserve.” He lay his head on Barry’s chest, and they just stayed liked that for a few minutes. Barry didn’t say anything. He wondered if the professor was listening to his heartbeat. “Thank you.”

“Yeah... You're welcome...”

Barry wanted to stay like that, but the vampire was leaving, climbing off the bed and slipping out the door long before Barry could collect his thoughts. He lay there, still and quiet, wondering why he hadn’t called him back when he could’ve. Where had that thought come from? Call him back for what? He’d taken the blood he’d needed. But maybe they could visit, or read, or... Barry closed his eyes again, throwing his arm over his face as he groaned with frustration.

What is it that I want?

Him?

Or do I just like the...closeness, the safety that I can't have anywhere else. What if I'm only thinking like this because I don't have any other options?

But he did have another option now. Barry thought of the house he could have. He thought about everything he could have. That normal life. A wife, family, children. But...he didn’t know if that’s what he truly wanted. At one time, he would’ve leapt at this kind of opportunity. Now, he was hesitating.

He thought of the vampire. Fingers in his cravat. Hand on his waist. Lips memorizing his neck. A heavy, warm embrace. The feeling of the calmness that came over him in Professor Thawne’s presence, like landing on a sheltered island amidst a stormy sea. It felt like...like nothing anyone had ever told him it could feel like. There were no words. Barry recalled the way the professor had held his hand as they gazed at the stars together. He remembered the way he’d stood close those nights where Barry felt scared, the touch on his back that had calmed him. He remembered every moment Professor Thawne had leapt to defend him, protect him. He’d stayed with him after nightmares. Gave him warmth after he’d fallen into a frigid lake. Wrapped his neck after Hunter had bloodied it.

All this time, Professor Thawne's actions had all been to keep him safe, happy, healthy. Even in the early days, when the vampire hadn't felt like safety yet.

Sappho’s poetry echoed through his thoughts. He remembered how she felt. A deep and desperate, aching longing. It’d felt familiar, and now he understood why.

Barry rolled over, climbing off the bed. He walked through the door. “Professor?” He asked at the empty kitchen. He knew that meant one thing. Professor Thawne was in the other room. Malcolm's room. He made his way there. “Professor,” he said, louder, pushing the partially-ajar door open. "I have something I need to-" He stopped short, shocked into silence.

The two vampires were scrambling away from each other, sheets shifting in a flurry, but all it took was a moment for Barry to comprehend the fact they were both nude.

Silence fell as all three froze in place.

Barry looked back and forth between them as his mind caught up with his eyes.

"Barry." It was Professor Thawne who said it. It broke the spell holding Barry still in denial.

Barry blinked a few times and spun on his heel, marching out. White hot anger bubbling up from his
stomach. He clenched his fist as he stormed out of the house, rushing down the street. He wanted to run, to scream, to break something.

“Barry!”

He felt sick. Wrong. The image of Eobard and Malcolm tangled in sheets burned into his head.

“Barry!”

No, no, no-

Why? Why did he have to be wrong? So damned wrong? Everything was so wrong-

“Barry would you please wait?”

Barry reluctantly halted and turned around. The vampire had dressed fast, though it was a bit of a mess, hair untidy, clothes askew, not matching, waistcoat missing. Barry narrowed his eyes, folding his arms.

“I deeply apologize you witnessed that, Barry-”

“Don’t.” Barry started, about to yell. He caught himself, then slowly uncurled his tight fists. He took a deep breath, reining it all in. “I...I don’t actually care,” he lied. The screaming in his mind grew louder. “Vampires. I know it’s a vampire thing.”

“You seem upset,” Professor Thawne said, pushing his hair back off his forehead before trying to straighten his clothes out.

Oh really? What gave that away? Barry swallowed, hard. “It’s just a reaction. I’ll get over it.”

“What...” Professor Thawne cleared his throat. “...did you need to tell me?”

Barry took a deep breath, realizing what he had to do, what he had to say. "You know, it's really crazy, because I keep... I keep thinking about you and I care about you and..." He swallowed. "I...want to be around you, and I feel like...being a pet isn't so bad after all. I love the manor, and those cats, and it's so relaxing most days, being able to just...talk to you about anything." He shifted, half expecting an interruption but getting none. "I...just want to be with you," he admitted, watching surprise flit across the vampire's face. "But...I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not like that. I don't want... I can't be with a man..."

"Barry-"

Barry pushed the next words out, interrupting the professor. “I’ve decided on the house.”

The reply was slow, hesitant, as if the professor didn't want to speak. His brows had knotted. “...Yes?”

“I want to buy it.”

Barry saw the professor’s expression change for a brief moment, but it was neutral again before a single heartbeat had passed. Barry must've imagined it. The professor obviously felt nothing except maybe a vague lust for him - at best. “Alright, Barry,” Professor Thawne said, taking a deep breath. A tight smile appeared on his face. “I will get everything taken care of. Do you want the job at the
“Yes.” Barry really didn’t want to see Malcolm ever again. Though in the meantime, that thought was probably impractical. He didn't have the house yet. He'd just have to wait until this was all over.

“I see. It will be done.” The professor turned and went back to the house.

*I need to focus on what's best for me, not this silly feeling anyway.* Barry stared down the street. Surely what he'd just seen had been his sign, the warning he needed to escape while he could. Why didn't this feeling go away? Why did he once again discover this, just to lose it all at once? The last time he’d let himself accept the feeling, he’d paid the price. At least this time, he hadn't gotten too far before his common sense got the better of him.

He lingered outside for awhile longer before going back to the house. Head down and eyes on the floor, he went straight to his room and dropped onto the bed, not even bothering with his clothes. He didn't fall asleep, but at least he was lying in bed for most of the night.

The money was exchanged, and Barry was soon working on moving in to the house. It wasn’t hard. All he had right now was a suitcase and a few essential items Professor Thawne had bought him to help him settle in. They'd also stocked up on food. It was decided that Professor Thawne would send him the rest of his things from the manor at a later time. All of this had been done with an air of professional calm between them.

Today was the final day of the move, the final day of Professor Thawne's stay. The vampire had gotten rather quiet and moody. Barry suspected he was disappointed to leave Malcolm. He knew they weren’t just casual. This wasn’t a thank you. They’d been at their...sodomy every night of the stay while Barry ignorantly slumbered.

When Barry had finished checking that his new stuff was in place at the house, the vampire handed him a small card. “This is the address of your workplace. You’ll go there Monday.”

Barry nodded, taking it.

He followed the professor outside, taking measured breaths of the cold air.

The vampire faced him. To Barry's surprise, Professor Thawne gave him a soft smile. “I’m happy we met, Barry Allen. You gave me a great gift.”

Barry blinked and swallowed at a lump in his throat. He didn’t know why he was suddenly hurting so much. His chest ached deeply, intensely. “Thanks... I really appreciate everything you’ve done for me.” He remembered something he’d been meaning to do. "Oh, I forgot to give this back." He tugged out the chain containing the red pendant and his mother's ring from where it was tucked under his shirt. He started to pull it off. "Let me just get the ring off-

Professor Thawne's hand on his stilled him. The touch was cool, calm. "Keep it."

Barry hesitated, staring at the hand on his. "Are you sure?"

"Yes... It has been yours since the day I gave it to you. Besides, it's your good luck token, remember?"

"If you insist." Barry let it fall against his chest again.

The vampire hugged him without warning.
Barry was stock still for several moments, unsure how to respond. Hesitantly, he raised his hands and reciprocated. He took an inhale, trying to memorize the vampire’s scent in that moment.

Professor Thawne drew back, his smile fading. “Farewell, Barry. I hope you find the life you want.”

“Farewell,” Barry whispered as the professor walked away. He watched Professor Thawne pace down the road, watched long after the vampire has left his sight, wondering if he’d ever see him again. “Probably not,” he whispered. He wished the tears in his eyes wouldn’t fall, but they did, leaving tracks of wetness down his cheeks. With a tight throat, he went back inside and to his new room, sitting on the unfamiliar bed. Since no one was there to hear, he decided to let himself start sobbing, burying his face into his new pillows. Oh, how he'd been needing to for awhile now.

Everything hurt so much.

Barry woke slowly, realizing he must've fallen asleep at some point. He stirred in bed, eyes blinking, head feeling achy and nose stuffy. He forced himself to get up and make dinner though. The meal he prepared was nowhere near as good as the dinners he'd had at Professor Thawne's, but he'd make do. He sat at the table, nibbling on his food unenthusiastically. He couldn't believe he'd once had a life of being alone full-time. It would take some getting used to again.

Meanwhile, with no distraction, his thoughts began to wander.

He wondered how long it would take the marks on his neck to fade, and he wondered if they’d ever truly be gone. Would he have to cover his neck for the rest of his life? And if he found a woman to marry, how would he explain them to her.

One day at a time, he told himself. He didn't want to think of this right now. Instead, he made himself think about the new job, wondering what it would be like. Working at a library should be relaxing. Books were comforting. He would be surrounded by the smell of parchment. He would just have to forget about how Professor Thawne's library had the exact same scent.

He shook his head. Okay, so maybe this was difficult now, he admitted. But with time, he would adjust. The memory of the manor would fade.

This was better.

It had to be.

God, he missed the cats, too. He felt bad. They wouldn't understand why he hadn't come home with the professor...

_That place isn't home, Barry_, he scolded himself. _This is._

He sat his fork down, appetite diminished. At the same time, he heard knocking on his door. He looked up, ignoring the stab of hope in his chest. Was it Professor Thawne? Not that there was any reason for it to be... But maybe he’d forgotten something here?

He got up and went to the door, opening it.

“Hello, Barry.”

Barry froze, staring. “Hunter.”

The vampire stood in the doorframe, posture loose and an ominous smile on his face. He seemed taller and broader than Barry remembered. “You don’t seem too preoccupied,” Hunter commented
lightly, peering past Barry's shoulders into the house. "May I come in?"

"Is there something you need?" Barry asked, his heart racing.

Hunter shoved past him, into the house, ignoring Barry's question. "Wow, it's amazing what Thawne will give up, huh? Wealth, personal possessions...even perfectly good blood servants... Then again, he always did have a soft heart for pretty men. I shouldn’t be surprised." He laughed, turning to Barry. "This couldn’t have worked out better if I’d planned for it to."

"What are you talking about?" Barry snapped, hands balling as anger began to overcome his fear.

"You see," Hunter replied, pointing at him, "you’re going to be my blood servant now. It’s only fair. You still owe me blood after I saved your life a few weeks ago, seeing as I only got a few mouthfuls before you were ready to collapse."

"I don’t owe you anything! I never agreed to give you that much! Now get out of my house!"

"Just as rude as ever..." Hunter stepped closer. "Don’t be like that, Barry. I can take care of you better than he ever did."

"I said leave!" Barry yanked the cover off his mother’s ring, holding it forward.

Hunter’s face shifted, darkening into an angry glare. "You have silver."

Barry drew the silver knife Professor Thawne had made him keep - he was thankful for that now - and pointed it at the vampire. “That’s right. You really think Professor Thawne would just leave me helpless? Now get out of here, or I will put a hole in you!”

Hunter glared for a minute, but then it abruptly faded. He chuckled. "You really think you can do to me what a group of hunters decked out head to toe in silver couldn't? That's funny. Guess we're doing this the hard way."

Barry gave a wild stab. To his shock, his blade actually struck something, grazing flesh. “Agh!" Hunter snarled. Barry felt fiery pain. Claws had scraped his cheek as Hunter flailed back. He felt blood welling, but he kept his focus on keeping the knife between them.

Hunter looked livid, fangs bared, his hand touching the blood beading on his own chest. "You little shit!"

"I said leave!" Barry yelled, deciding to take the initiative, he moved forward to attack, making a wild stabbing motion.

There was a blur and Hunter vanished. Something struck Barry's legs. He hit the floor. He rolled over as claws reached for him, swung at the beast above him. He cried out at a sharp blow to his arm. The knife skittered away across the floor, and Barry felt the chain to the pendant and his mother's ring being ripped from his neck and flung away. Clawed hands searched for more silver on his person as Barry struggled to get away.

"No!" Barry yelled, trying to kick out, but Hunter pinned him. “Let me go!” He tried to throw the monster off, but he couldn’t. "I won't give you my bloo-"

Two large hands twisted around his throat, tightening, cutting off his words. "Stop yelling," Hunter growled. "I'm starting to get a headache now."

*I'm...going to die like this...巴拉第努力反抗，但是被猎人控制着。*
use. He pulled feebly at Hunter's wrists. He needed air in his aching lungs, now, but couldn't get it. His heart thudded with panic. He couldn't keep fighting though. The room was fading around him. It's not fair... I just wanted... Just wanted...

Professor! he tried to cry out, but he couldn't talk. His grip on the vampire's wrists loosened, arms falling numbly. Everything went foggy, and then his eyes rolled up as the world faded to black.

End Notes

If you're interested, you can find me on Tumblr! UnknownSatellite804

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