



ANNWN'S MAELSTROM FESTIVAL  
CONCLUDING VOLUME OF THE VAMPIRE NOCTUARIES

ERIC MUSS - BARNES

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## Chapter One

My name is Helle DuBois and I am the dark faerie Daughter of the late Elric DuBois. Everyone calls Me, “Hel”.

I'm not very good at telling stories.

Honestly, I didn't want to tell this story at all. But after reading Elric's noctuary, *The Gothic Rainbow*, I felt obligated to finish the remainder of His tale.

Yes, I did say “the late” Elric DuBois. You read that right. He died sometime ago. I know I'm not supposed to tell you that. Right? Not yet anyway. Storytellers are supposed to save those climactic revelations for later.

That's bullshit.

Elric meant everything to Me and I shall love Him for eternity. To keep His death hidden and use it like a damn punchline is pretty disrespectful if you ask Me. So, I'm going to tell you right up front - He is gone and this book shall end with His passing. In fact, many of the DuBois family vampires die by the end of this tale.

Wait. “I'm going to tell you right up front?”

Or should that be, “I'm telling you right up front.”?

Shit, I don't know. Like I said, I'm not too good at this.

I'm going to assume you already read His story in *The Gothic Rainbow*. If not, what the fuck are you reading this for? This story won't make any sense if you haven't read His tale first. I'm not going to recap things for you. This isn't some lame television show that brings you “up to speed” first. Get your shit together and read His beginning.

So how did He die?

Well, it's a long story. Where to begin?

Allyson taught Elric all about The Killing Game. Little did My beloved Elric realize He was a victim of it too - just another Pawn in a cruel and

deceptive centuries-old Killing Game being played by the heartless DuBois sisters.

Unbeknownst to Elric, Camillia and Allyson were not the only vampiric sisters in the DuBois family. There was a third. One Who no longer lived in the DuBois mansion. Her name was Jacqueline; the eldest of the three.

Elric was a truly noble and good soul as a mortal.

When He met Jacqueline, He was still mortal and She quickly fell in love with him. He never knew this, of course. She never revealed Her feelings to him. As far as Elric was concerned, Jacqueline was just a friendly acquaintance. He certainly never knew She was a vampire either. After all, what sane mortal would believe such a thing?

Being completely devoted to his girlfriend, Sasha, Elric never gave Jacqueline much thought, really.

But to Jacqueline, he was something unforgettable. Pure. Innocent. An embodiment of everything She was missing in Her Own existence.

As Elric had done to so many mortals, His memories of the night He was made immortal were altered. Clouded. He presumed His fragmented recollections were simply due to having been so close to death and because the events surrounding His demise were so horrible that anyone would seek to forget them. Perhaps His mind was just forcing Him to never remember.

In truth, it was Jacqueline who forced Him to forget. All the key moments of that tragic evening were twisted by Jacqueline's doing.

He was not beaten and left for dead in some alley where he stumbled through a skylight and was found by Camillia.

No.

Those were false memories.

Truthfully, he was beaten and dumped in Jacqueline's back yard.

Finding the boy She secretly loved, covered in blood and nearly dead, poor Jacqueline couldn't resist the Hunger.

So near to death, the only way he could possibly survive was for Her to do the one thing She never dreamed of doing.

Jacqueline was the one who Turned Elric into an immortal that night, not Her Sister Camillia.

Tortured by the guilt of what She had just done, Jacqueline took Elric back to the DuBois mansion where She begged Camillia for help.

Taking full blame and responsibility, out of love for Her Sister, Camillia agreed to help Elric.

But not the way Jacqueline intended.

Instead, Camillia helped Elric bring out His darkest self.

Helped to make Him cruel and merciless.

Helped strip away all the purity that made Jacqueline love him in the first place.

Why would Camillia do such a thing?

Well, I'm getting way, way ahead of Myself. Plus, like I said, I'm not very good at telling stories.

Let Me start over at the beginning.

Things really started a few weeks after I was Turned by Elric. It all began on the Winter Solstice of that year - at the party celebrating the anniversary of Our Sister Allyson being Unborn.

## Chapter Four

Five teenagers. Snuck into the cemetery for a midnight scare. Up to no good and looking for trouble.

My Lover and I were happy to oblige.

No mortal could have heard them from where We were. Hundreds of feet away, We turned to the shadowslip and flowed down the hillside like so much sinister smoke and shade.

The laughter of the children faded as We approached.

Mortal dread stirred them to silence.

They could feel Our presence. Something wasn't right. Something was watching them from the trees. Something that wasn't supposed to be real. Something that the collective unconscious of all humans has come to fear over thousands of generations. Something their primal hearts all knew existed, but never dared to admit.

My Love, still the shadow.

I, the white wolf.

"Listen," one of the girls said to her friends.

Straining, they looked in Our direction.

Out of the dark we emerged, Elric bursting forth in a billowing wave of black horror.

"Run." His voice boomed while still a shadow.

The teens screamed and cursed, flying as fast as mortal feet would carry them through the thick snowdrifts, over gravestones, up hillsides, between trees. Clamoring. Panicking. Shrieking. Shouting.

As the wolf, I towered by Elric's side. Fur pure as the driven snow surrounding Us. Ready to hunt.

His dark hand, cool under the scruff of My neck. My fangs bared, ready for the kill. For the passion of dirt and leaf underfoot and My paws to tear into the earth and nature herself does quiver at the power of My gait.

"Patience, My Darling." Elric commanded.

Yes, My Beloved. To give chase too quickly robs Me of the pleasure of the hunt. Best to give them a head start. Give them hope. For it is by the murder of their prayers of salvation that the greatest pleasure of their demise is relished.

Allow them to think they have a chance.

Only to discover no god will protect them from My fury.

My muscles pulsed under My fur. I was ready.

Elric sensed My eagerness. He dug His hand into my neck, holding Me back for a moment.

“Patience.” He repeated.

The children had gotten further away. Three up the hill towards the Garfield Monument and two down the valley towards Wade Chapel.

Impatient, I growled and looked at My Husband once more.

Slowly, He grinned.

“Hunt.”

And so to the hunt and the fever of snow. The scent of bark on winter dead trees and the crush of leaves under ice.

How the children do clamor and cry, struggling to run up the hillsides. Weaving around shrubs and brambles and panting among tombstones.

The trail through the snow led up to the Rockefeller obelisk.

I approached in silence.

The ice of a snowman with a ballerina’s soul.

“What was that?” One boy whispered to another, hidden behind the white marble. Breath steaming on chill wind.

“Shut up! It’ll hear you!” Another scolded, his breath fogging on the cold night air even more.

“Where’s Jenna and Madylin?” The third boy asked, in the quietest whisper of all.

There are those who have forgot the magick, both light and dark. Them that forget, live in their fancy houses and towering highrises, surrounded day and night by steel and concrete and glass and carpet and all manner of things which be helping shield them from the remembering. Were they to step into the underbrush and find the scent of rain and honeysuckle in their nostrils, to feel the mosses and cool stone of woodland boulders beneath their fingertips, to taste the springfresh water of a stream across parched lips, to hear snow crunch under barefeet and soles toughen to the icy cold, there would they start to remember that the magick lives far beyond the asphalt and automobiles within which they have encased themselves from

the true nature of the world. For magick, you see, is the true nature of the world. All the islands of concrete and steel are a miniscule oasis in the vast expanse of the dreaming world. Living without magick is the illusion, for magick can never be denied. Thus does the presence of My Siabrah soul remind them. Dragging them back into the dark forest. Something old. Something primal. Something they know is real despite all the denial they build around themselves, to sever their minds from knowing the magick. Minds young and naive as toddlers, for they are sons of sons who have forgotten and forgotten more still, and none have ever taught them the true nature of Our nightwind.

When one returns to the heart of magick, the remember time gets easy. Living in artificial landscapes of steel mountains and brick rivers and office buildings, people forget the magick ways. They replace the bonfire glow of mystic storytelling and tribal dance with television glows and spiritless visions. In the confines of their magickstarved rooms, they begin to believe crazy thoughts, like denying the magick exists at all.

Snow began to fall, and dissolved out of a snowflake fog, I appeared.

Towering and hell flame eyes I snarled.

Frozen with shock, one boy shook his head, “Can’t be. It can’t be. Can’t be real.”

Leaping towards him, I ripped out his throat in a single bite. As his friend screamed, my massive paw pinned him to the ground, cracking his ribs as I crushed his corpse into the snow.

The blood I drank deep and honeydew. Spiced of fear and terror it gushed warm down My throat and matted fur perfumed.

The third boy ran off in tears and horror. I could have let him go, so he’d always have a story to tell, which none would ever believe.

Instead I followed silently.

He ran frantically over graves and lost his footing in the dark, twisting an ankle on a tombstone over and again. Patches of ice on the roadway. Buried headstones under snow. All served to trip him up as he fled like a terrified child.

No easy feat, he scaled the cemetery fence next to the Mayfield Road gates. Had it not been fleeing for his life, I doubt he would have had the fortitude to achieve such a stunt.

Crying and delirious with horror, he ran to his car which had been parked on Kenilworth and fumbled for his keys, shaking like an electroshock patient.



Returning to human form, I stepped from the shadows.

“Don’t be afraid.” I said calmly.

The boy yelled out, then collapsed against his car. He still hadn’t managed to find the correct key to open the door since he was shuddering so badly.

He sighed, “I... Oh, I thought You were... something... something else.”

“Oh?” I asked, calmly. “What did you think I might be?”

Looking both confused and embarrassed, the boy said nothing. His mind was still in denial - reeling over the fact that he had just seen a giant white werewolf murder his friends. None of this could truly be happening. Could it?

“I... I don’t...” His voice trailed off and he began looking over his shoulders again, expecting the wolf to jump out from behind another car or some bushes or one of the nearby apartment alleyways.

“When I was a little girl,” I told him, “I often practiced dream control. I became quite good at it too. Read many books on the subject.”

My canines grew long, “Many cultures teach that during a nightmare, one should summon dream friends to assist in defeating whatever is pursuing you.”

Looked at me, scared and confused, he didn’t say a word. His mind unable to understand what was happening. I giggled, “Now, had this been a dream, this would have been the perfect time for you to ask for help.”

Obviously, he hadn’t read the books.

I stared into the distance behind him. “Hey,” I said, squinting and pointing, “What is that?”

He spun around in a flash, intently surveying the snowy road.

While his back was turned to Me, I again transformed into the form of the white wolf.

“What?” The boy asked in a panic. “What did You see? Where was it? Is it still after Me?”

When he turned back towards me, the scream caught in his throat and although his mouth was open to shout, nothing more than a squeal came out of his lips.

As the wolf, I stood before him again.

I fed and savored the cream that fear gives to the blood of dying boys.

## Chapter Six

“Come away. I need to show You something.” Elric lead Me out of the balcony, where I was learning “*Stolen Child*” by Loreena McKennitt on the harp. Never dreamed I’d get to learn something so elegant in a place so majestic.

The moonlit shadows of an ash tree plucked at the strings and continued the song, long after Elric and I departed the room.

“Where are We going?” I giggled as He pulled Me along, out into the Unseelie gardens.

He didn’t say a word. Smiling, His eyes simply bade Me to follow.

Down cobblestone pathways We wandered. Through waters and wild. Past gurgling streams and toadstool rings. Over mossy rock bridges and bluebell ridges. Sculpted trees and shrubbery and colonnade statues of granite and quartz dotted gravel walkways which rolled and turned with the contours of the valley.

Now and then, Titania fireflies of autumn sparkled between black iron lanterns. Their oily flames illuminated the onyx night with orange frost. Light capped atop the moonglow amethystine glosses of the dark.

Hounds barked over distant hills and anxious children wept in their beds, for Changelings were abreast, snatching brothers and sisters to the world of tears. How the dark ones loved to watch from briar and brush. For in these hours did all manner of magicks swear fealty to their Host, and thereby, things were ever so lovely in the gardens.

Rounding a corner, behind the rose plumes and cherry trees, there sprang the glorious fountain, trimmed of frothy bubbles. Petals decorated the stone beneath Out feet like couril confetti.

Intricate pathways spilled into the dark of the grimwood and over arced viaducts in stone that appeared too elaborate and delicate to stand.

To My soul it were as though all marvels beneath the moon stood in those very terraces, like an oasis of glee. Wondrous billowed atop wondrous as We meandered by beauty beyond beauty and joy reigned from crown to toes.

“Oh, Elric.” I sighed, overcome by the beauty of it all.

Sitting Me down aside the fountain, We moved close to each other. The stone bench of the fountain was smooth and warm to the touch. I reached into the waters and found them equally warm, but soft, like aloe and lace.

“It’s so beautiful.” I reached out and touched His cheek. His flesh ruggd under My fingers. “You are still a dream.”

“And still none of this beauty compares to Thee, My love. You have always been My dream.” His Own hand touched Me and My face melted into His palm.

So strong. Yet so gentle.

Pulling Me to Him, We kissed.

His lips were tender, yet forceful. As His succulent tongue met Mine, His free hand reached around My back and clawed down My spine.

I gasped and I felt the power of this grip across My back.

His touch could turn Me on instantly.

Every vertebrae of My bones shuddered with a shock straight into the base of My skull and ricocheted down into My thighs.

Both of My hands reached up and yanked His head backwards as My fangs scraped across His neck.

He growled and shoved Me.

I stumbled back on the bench and half fell into the fountain.

Water splashed as My palm smacked into the waters and cascaded onto the back of My hair. Nereid arms of midnight blue, scratched from the pool.

Regaining My composure, I snapped My gaze back on Him. His fangs glowed iridescent in the light reflecting off the waters as He grinned at Me.

Grinning back at Him, My heart raced faster.

Yes.

He wanted Me, just as I wanted Him.

No gentle lovemaking.

This would be the passionfire of blackened succubus souls.

Now to the rage. Now to the hate. Now to the odious fever.

Then it began.

In one blinding flash, He slammed His full weight atop Me and tore off My blouse. My shoulder blasted hard into the stone bench. Shrieking in pain, My fist backhanded Him across the face. He barely flinched.

Brutally, Elric rolled and forced Me to the ground, kissing Me harder than ever. I heard Myself moan and raked My hand across His chest. Fingers of werewolf malice, I ripped at Him over and over, until I finally tore the fabric apart and left gashes in His flesh.

He hissed and His tongue lapped at My throat, teasing with His fangs. Dragging Me to My knees, hands clamped around My neck and He pushed Me down. Clawing at His pants, I quickly had them undone. My skirt was ripped at the waist. I don't know if He had done it or if it was Me. I was shredding My panties aside as He slipped into Me and Our hips bucked together.

He moaned at the pain. Furious with Me and dizzy with My bite, He shuddered at the pleasure.

My hair was wet from the fountain and splattering across the cobblestones. Choking Me as I drank from Him. The blood pouring down My throat, I gagged as He strengthened His grasp.

My thighs were burning. My heart searing with the shudder of My approaching orgasm and the intoxicating dream of His blood flowing into Me.

*- whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people -*

He pushed up away from Me and spun Me around. Keeping Me just on the edge. My nipples bristled in the night air as His naked chest peeled off of My Own. How I loved the feel of His skin upon Mine.

Without a moment to gain My bearings, He entered Me from behind. I gasped at the sharp burn of that first thrust. The sound of the fountain, the color of the moonlight, the taste of blood, the baying of hounds, the melody of harpstrings, all exploded in My head at once. I didn't even notice the pain of the cobblestones on My knees or the ache as My forearms bashed into the ground with each plunge.

Gripping a fistful of My hair, He nearly ripped it out of My skull as He yanked My head back. As the sting shot down My neck, I came a third time.

The darkness itself was aroused by Our seduction.

Digging His claws into My shoulders, He tore flesh to muscle.

Fuck, that hurt.

Knocking Him off of Me from the wound, I screeched and spun around and sprang back to My feet.

Caught off-guard, He leapt back to His.

We stood facing each other. Panting. Clothes tattered. Blood coating His throat and chest. More splattered down Our legs.

“Asshole!” I jumped on top of Him, knocking Him back across the fountain. My claws dug into His chest.

Grinding My legs atop of Him, I pinned Him down and took Him back into Me. He bucked against Me like a caged beast. Over and over I began to move like a machine of fury and poison.

I felt His thighs tighten.

More blood.

Spilling. Splashing. Flowing deep into Me as He came again.

Blood and water and moonlight and pain and pleasure.

Gluttonous upon such passions. I stand stoic. I am become the alabaster chatelaine and caterwauling whore. I do bid unto Him. Sidle as ghostwail music. Youthful bliss fades. Beasts wail with longing. Within raced the sickened devils to thief the pulse of My life. There to plant briar and bramble and thorn, to cut and tear with shrill wooded blades. My breast pines with His hurt. The loathing He suppressed grew in dark pits I consumed for Him. As the arteries of rubies, My flesh chained in steel with pilings, far below the sands of the Apollyon pier.

We never did leave the gardens that evening. Our bodies covered in cuts and bruises and gashes from claws and fangs. Laying next to the fountain, We licked Each Others wounds and I fell in love with Him again and again as I replayed every detail of Our violent love in My head.

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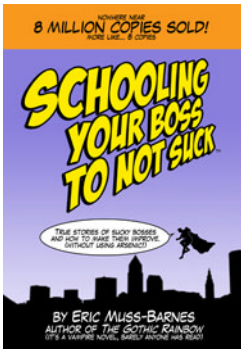


**The Gothic Rainbow:  
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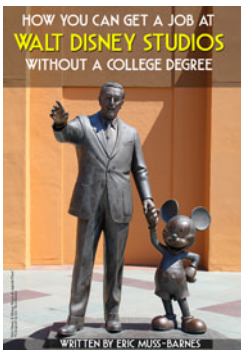
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Fetishes claw inside of you. Ones you dare never admit.  
Desires you could never reveal. Claims of being free of all their  
taboos has never made you stop fearing your own carnal wants...  
For none could ever endure your passions and live.

Whips and chains are for prudes.

Fangs. Talons. Blood of full moons. The darkest hungers never die.  
Tell us the tale of your lusts. Succumb to the story of your deviance.

Or pretend this isn't you at all. Wonder how far burns the flame,  
but fear to melt the wax. No matter. We have you eternal.  
Wondering. Wanting. Trapped with no escape from the blackest  
scenarios you envision.

Know no remorse. Submit to this dread sensuality.

Mock my every word, for still, this is you.

There is a vampire legend within us all. You have felt it for years.  
Yearned to hear of it. To read of it. See it in a tangible form. Live it.  
Hungered. And yet no one has ever even spoken of it. No one has  
ever given that saga a voice... Until now...

This is the myth of the vampire as you have always dreamed it  
should be told. The one we have all secretly shared, but never  
expressed.

Hear how she wants every boy and girl?

The dawn of eternal night has come.