

## Blue Blood

Time – 1795

Place – The docks of Collinsport

He'd already done this more times than he ever had wanted to. But he couldn't even get someone to murder him. So here he was again. Animal blood just didn't do it for Barnabas Collins. There was something that compelled him to come back to this place night after night, something about taking the woman in his arms. "Josette, why?"

He saw his prey in the mist, about 30 feet ahead of him. Her head was down, almost as if she were praying over the water. She did not so much as startle when he walked up to her. "Good evening."

She turned her head slowly to look up at him. She did not wish to speak, but even in her state, she knew some propriety must be observed. "Hello," she mumbled, only barely intelligible to either of them.

Barnabas tried to observe her eyes, but she averted her gaze so quickly that he didn't really get a good look at her face at all. She resumed her position, head down, eyes almost closed. "I don't believe I have met you, I am...Barnabas Collins."

She looked up at him again, weary of his presence already. He was going to be persistent. "My name is Esther."

Barnabas tilted his head. This one was not going to be easy! He didn't understand why he was as compelled toward her as she should have been toward him...but something was not right. "I sense something is wrong. Very wrong, from the look on your face."

Esther regarded him ruefully. For the first time, Barnabas could see, even in the light that only darted in and out, that her eyes were green. "Forgive me, Mr. Collins, for not wishing to speak of my troubles."

"You consider suicide." Barnabas hoped making the statement outright might shock the woman into speaking. He dared not lay a hand on her.

She brought a gloved hand to her eyes, which teared up in spite of herself. "If you must know, yes. I wish to die, this night," she choked.

Barnabas felt compassion inside. At least that hadn't died yet! "Esther...forgive my forwardness in using your given name...tell me how this came about." She took a step back from the edge of the dock. "Maybe all she needs is someone to listen", he thought. "And that might be long enough for someone else to come along on whom I might feed."

“How much can one woman bear?” she said, almost musing to herself rather than speaking to Barnabas directly. A little louder, she began to speak again. “I received word from Boston this morning that my mother has died. She suffered from the gout for many years, and now pneumonia has taken her. This after losing both of my children to influenza and my husband to another woman. I walked in on them, Mr. Collins. I have nothing left to live for.”

Barnabas felt so strange after hearing Esther’s story. He wanted her to live more than he even wanted his old life back! He knew if he bit her, it would give her what she wanted, death – but how angry would she be when she rose a vampire like him?

Esther turned away from Barnabas’ steady gaze. She knew deep down that he had listened to her; he’d hung on every word she’d said. On any other night, she would have welcomed the sight of someone as handsome as him. But now, she wanted nothing more than to have the ocean take her. She had to somehow get him to leave her alone, but how? Maybe she should just make a run and jump. She lifted her skirts...

“No, Esther.” He said it slowly, as a slender hand reached for her.

She jerked away. Doing her best to sound haughty, she retorted, “How dare you touch me!”

“Esther.” He commanded her attention. He might not have a choice but to bite her, put her under his power long enough to get her to listen to him. He needed to tell her what death was.

She could not keep up her charade. Covering her face, she finally let tears come, tears that had waited months. She wasn’t allowed by her strict family to cry at her children’s death, despite every instinct and cell in her needing the release. She was so angry at her husband that she couldn’t cry. She’d nearly cried when she received the news of her mother’s death. “Death is all around me...” she sobbed. “Death of body and soul.”

Barnabas felt then he had to take his chances with his hunger. He put his hands on her shoulders, softly drawing her to him, rocking her slightly. He remembered a few nights before, when Ruby Tate had so willingly thrown herself into his embrace. But Esther was hesitant before her hands slipped upward on his chest. He felt her shoulders rise and fall with her cries, and he pulled her as tightly as he could.

After a few minutes, Esther’s tears stopped. She pulled back to look up at Barnabas. “Thank you,” she choked out brokenly.

Finally he got a good look at her, and he found her lovely. “Your eyes are still so sad, so empty,” he told her.

“It is how I feel inside,” she replied simply. She did not try to look away. His eyes had widened, and feelings of a different sort were beginning to fill her.

Barnabas recognized this look well. “You are hungry, Esther. You are hungry for love, love you have not had in some time.”

Esther rested her head on his chest, not saying a word. She hoped he would understand what she wanted. “Love me, Barnabas,” she pleaded in her thoughts. “Love me...”

Barnabas’ need rose up inside him. He knew if he left her, she would jump into the churning waters below. But if he stayed, he would give her a kind of life that would make her want death even more. The conflict was so great...and the consequences so unspeakable, even to one such as he. He’d already lost Josette to that kind of death. He could not lose another. He let his hunger overtake him, and he pushed the high collar of her dress away...but he would not be rough with her as he punctured her neck with the terrible tools of his undead existence.

“Ahhhh...” She sighed, and Barnabas realized she had not recoiled. He did not take enough from her to begin to make her his, but enough that he would know her thoughts. If she thought to come here again, he reasoned, he would be able to stop her. But her blood did not taste the same. Had all the pain she’d been through even affected her blood? He wondered as he let her go. He’d help her find somewhere to sit and rest, to allow her to forget what had happened; he hoped, to forget that she ever desired to die. She was drifting to sleep, and he found a warm place in the shack where he and Ben had carefully crafted plans for Josette. He knew she would be safe there.

He dared to press his still-bloody lips to her cheek as he watched her drift to sleep. “Good night, Esther,” he whispered. He walked out; he’d have Ben check on her later. His walk back to the mausoleum was filled with the strangest of thoughts, that somehow, even taking her blood, he had, in fact, saved her life. What an odd feeling that something so evil could have been used for good.

~end~