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Family Tradition

By
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"...and Chelsea is the new Miss Hooters of Cocoa Beach!" said Maria, the restaurant manager. Amidst the cheers and hoots of the audience, Chelsea Van Helsing received the aluminum tiara from last year's winner, Sara. Seconds later, Sara and Maria threw the "Miss Hooters of Cocoa Beach" sash over her shoulder and handed her a bouquet of red roses. As she clutched the tiara to keep it from wobbling, Chelsea posed and smiled for the photographers.

Chelsea hugged and kissed the runner-up and the other contestants. "This is way cool!" she cried. "I actually won a bikini pageant! This is way cool!"

Hooters, the restaurant chain with waitresses who wore white tank tops and tight orange shorts, had a series of beauty pageants for its waitresses. Now she was Miss Hooters of Cocoa Beach. To what heights would she strut next?

Maria grabbed the microphone again. "Chelsea will represent Cocoa Beach at the Miss Hooters International Pageant in Las Vegas. In addition, she'll receive a hundred-dollar gift certificate from the Econo-Mall."

The gift certificate wasn't the university scholarship that the Miss America Pageant gave its winner, but Chelsea didn't complain. She needed all the money she could get for college.

On her way out of the crowded restaurant, Chelsea stopped to autograph a poster of the contestants, which showed her in the red bikini. Too tired to change into her civilian clothes, she grabbed her duffle bag, threw on an overcoat, hopped into her white convertible, and drove back to her apartment.

As she unlocked her door, a balding man wearing the black suit of an Eastern Orthodox

priest approached her. He was Father Boris Buca, a new visiting professor at the Department of Theology, Cocoa Beach University.

“So how did the contest go?” he asked.

Chelsea showed him the tiara. “Oh, just fabulous! I won!”

“Congratulations,” Father Buca said. “I hope that my blessing helped. Never before had anyone asked me to bless a beauty pageant contestant.”

Chelsea nodded. “For that, you get ten free chicken wings. I’ll get a coupon for you. Good night, Father.”

She entered her apartment, went to the bedroom, and threw off her overcoat, leaving herself clad only in her bikini.

“I say, young lady, must you display yourself in public wearing immodest apparel such as that?” a voice said in the Dutch accent of Chelsea’s ancestors.

She spun around and saw an old man dressed in a black morning coat and pants, white shirt with upturned collar, and plaid bow tie. His straggly, unkempt hair and goatee were as white as snow, and his hostile eyes stared at her through thin wire glasses. In his Victorian clothes, he would have looked like an actor from a play except that he was semi-transparent. Chelsea could see right through him.

Chelsea moaned. “Great-great-granddad, don’t you ever knock? Like on the door?”

The ghost of Abraham Van Helsing scowled. “I keep telling you that I have no solid form to knock on doors.”

Chelsea put on her overcoat. “So you just appear in a girl’s bedroom unannounced — like your old buddy, Dracula?”

Abraham sighed, and Chelsea smirked. She knew the old ghost hated being compared to his old enemy.

“Chelsea, I am distressed to see you squandering your life serving beer to ruffians of the lower classes and displaying yourself in a manner that would embarrass even the most shameless trollops,” he said. “You should take a more respectable trade, like our family tradition.”

“I’m having too much fun serving beer to horny frat boys, posing for swimsuit calendars, and hanging out with my friends. Why should I go skulking around in cemeteries at night?”

“That is what our family does,” Abraham said. “I pledged myself to rid the world of the evil of vampirism.”

“There are no vampires in Cocoa Beach,” Chelsea said.

“Before I died, there were rumors that Dracula was somehow revived after I beheaded him,” Abraham said. “Now I suspect that he may have come here to Cocoa Beach, America.”

“Why do you think he’s here?” Chelsea demanded. “Did a ship come in with its entire crew dead? Is a plague of rats infesting the city? Are mental cases eating flies and spiders?”

“There are increasing numbers of Romanian immigrants arriving to these shores,” Abraham said. “He and his acolytes could be among them.”

“*That’s* why you think Dracula is here? Oh, so like, they passed the Homeland Security anti-terrorist test, but they didn’t pass the Abraham Van Helsing anti-vampire test?”

“Chelsea, do not take my warnings lightly. Dracula is King of the Undead. Being undead is the worst state of evil. You must destroy Dracula to stop the evil.”

“Oh, he’s undead, so he’s evil,” Chelsea mused. “What about you, then? You’re just as dead as he is.”

Abraham shook his head. “No, no. Dracula is undead. I am dead. There is a difference.”

“Oh, as if!” Chelsea cried.

“It is our family tradition to kill the undead,” Abraham urged. “Please, be like your father and help me lay a trap for vampires at the cemetery.”

“I’ll tell you what a trap is. Our family tradition is a trap,” Chelsea said. “Well, forget that!”

“It is your destiny!”

“Get out of here! Go haunt someone who cares!”

Abraham Van Helsing’s ghost disappeared with a “poof” noise, which he made when he was extremely annoyed. Tired and exasperated, Chelsea fell onto her bed.

“Hi, my name’s Chelsea, and I’ll be your Hooters Girl,” Chelsea cooed as she leaned over the table to talk to the customer. By leaning over, she gave the customer a good look at her deep cleavage. She didn’t mind, though; he was only looking, not groping, and flashing her cleavage at him would guarantee her a big tip.

But instead of staring at her cleavage, the customer looked into her eyes.

Chelsea stared into his deep green eyes. They seemed intense and hypnotic, as if they could pierce a girl’s soul and discover her deepest desires and fantasies. She drifted into a daydream...

Chelsea snapped back to attention. “Oh, sorry, I got a little distracted.” She wiped the drool

off her lips. “Uh, as I said, my name is Chelsea.”

“It is a pleasure to meet a beautiful lady such as you, Chelsea,” the customer said. His voice sounded soft and seductive. “My name is Ivan Teppish.”

“Great to meet you too, Ivan. Are you visiting from out of town?”

“I have recently moved here to start a business. I am from Romania,” he said.

“Oh, so cool,” Chelsea said. “You’ve got a cute accent. You sound just like Count Chocula.” Ivan’s smile faded.

Chelsea flipped her black hair. “So can I get you something to drink? A beer? Or a wine?”

“I never drink wine. Please give me, uh, what do you call it, a Bud Light?”

Ivan ordered a steak sandwich cooked extra rare, pink with blood oozing. After bringing the steak to him, Chelsea rang up the tab for another customer. As she stood by the cash register, she stared at Ivan eating his blood-soaked steak.

In a restaurant full of guys in golf shirts, jeans, and baseball caps, Ivan wore a white shirt, a deep red tie, and an elegant black suit that Chelsea recognized as an Armani. This man dressed to impress.

He was also incredibly gorgeous, with his handsome face and thick black hair. And he filled out that designer suit very well, Chelsea noticed. She fantasized about the finely-sculpted, athletic, toned body under the designer suit: the muscular biceps, the strong chest, the flat stomach, the firm butt...

The other waitresses ogled Ivan too. As they passed his table, the girls swayed their hips and twirled their hair around their fingers.

“Oh, your customer is *sooooo* adorable,” Kate squealed as she approached the cash register. “He is just stud material.”

“I can see all the other girls going all droolily and hair-twirly around him. The power of male pheromones,” Chelsea said. “But hah, he’s at *my* table tonight.”

She sauntered over to Ivan’s table, sat down, smiled, and asked, “So, how’s the steak?”

Ivan smiled back at her. “It is excellent, very juicy and tender, as young, beautiful, fresh meat should be.”

“Another satisfied customer. Great! Did you say that you’re here to start a business? What kind of business is it?”

“I own a multi-million dollar enterprise in Romania. I am establishing a branch of my business here.”

He handed a business card to Chelsea. She looked at the card:

Carfax Jewelers

Diamonds and Gold Jewelry

“Wow, you deal in diamonds and jewelry,” Chelsea said.

Ivan looked seductively into her eyes again. “I like to acquire things of beauty.”

Chelsea nodded and looked dreamily into his eyes. Those eyes could hypnotize her into doing anything with him, she realized.

She regained her senses and shifted her gaze to a brooch pinned to the lapel of his suit. It looked like a gold reptile curled into a circle with diamonds for its eyes.

“What’s that?” she said.

“Ah, that is a dragon. My ancestors were Romanian nobility. They were members of the Order of the Dragon, a noble society pledged to free our lands from invaders.”

“Way cool. It’s so pretty,” Chelsea said.

“It is gold with inlaid diamonds,” Ivan said.

Kate came by. "Did I hear someone say gold and diamonds?"

"Look at that cool brooch he has," Chelsea pointed out.

"Oh, I want to take a closer look at it," said Kate.

As Kate bent over, a large silver cross dangled from a chain around her neck. As the cross swung, light glinted from it.

Ivan hissed and put his hands in front of his face.

“Ivan, what’s wrong?” Chelsea said.

“Uh, nothing, nothing at all,” Ivan said as settled back into his chair. "Uh, I got startled, that's all."

“Oh, sorry for bothering you,” Kate said before going to the kitchen.

As she watched Kate leave, Chelsea felt a hand touch hers. She turned to Ivan.

“From the time I first saw you on the poster of the Miss Hooters Pageant, I knew that I must have you,” Ivan said. “I want you. And you want me.”

“Are you asking me for a date?” she said.

Ivan gripped her hand tighter. “Yes, you will join me. I can feel your blood boiling with

desire.”

His smooth, manly voice was hypnotic. It could put a girl into a trance, Chelsea thought. But then her mind jolted, as if she suddenly awoke.

Chelsea pulled her hand away and giggled. “We Hooters Girls get hit on all the time. I’ve never gone out with a customer. Why should you be any different?”

“You American girls always play hard to get,” Ivan said.

He fished into his pocket and pulled out a gold chain. He dangled it in front of Chelsea, and she saw the diamonds suspended from it.

He glanced at the other men in the restaurant. “These boys will give you flowers and chocolates as if they were diamonds, but I can give you diamonds as if they were flowers and chocolates.”

Chelsea hadn’t seen diamonds like these before. “Ooooooh. Diamonds are a girl’s best friend.”

“You have such a *beautiful* neck,” Ivan said. “This chain would add to its beauty. I would be honored to put it around your neck as a simple memento of our first date. Come with me tonight.”

“Not tonight. I’ll be too tired after my shift,” Chelsea said, “but I have the day shift on Friday. It ends at seven. Drop by then, and we’ll do the date thing.”

“It would be an honor and a pleasure,” Ivan said. He rose from his chair, bowed to Chelsea, and kissed her hand.

On Friday, Ivan returned to the restaurant just as Chelsea’s shift ended, and they went dancing at a local nightclub. After midnight, they arrived at Chelsea’s apartment.

“This has been a wonderful evening,” Chelsea said as she put the key into her door.

“The pleasure is all mine,” Ivan said. “You are an extremely desirable woman, all that a man can ever want.”

He lifted the gold chain from his pocket and placed it around Chelsea’s neck.

“A beautiful chain for a beautiful woman,” he whispered. He moved behind her and placed the chain around her neck.

He lifted her hair and nibbled on her ear lobe. He stroked her shoulders and arms.

Chelsea purred with pleasure. “Ooooooooh, you move quickly on a first date.”

“I fly with the speed of a raven, and I can take you to heights you have never before imagined,” Ivan said.

He licked her neck. Chelsea closed her eyes and moaned softly as she felt his hot breath upon her tingling skin. As Ivan’s arms encircled her just below her breasts, Chelsea felt the heat of his body, as if their clothes had melted away.

She gyrated and ground her butt against his groin in a lascivious dance. She felt sensual and lustful.

His lips and tongue caressed her neck. Then she felt his teeth upon her skin.

“Good evening,” a voice said.

“Father Buca!” Chelsea cried out as she broke herself from Ivan’s grip. “Uh, you’ve been out late tonight.”

Ivan hissed and backed himself against the wall. He glared at the priest.

“Uh, Ivan, this is Father Buca from the university,” Chelsea said.

“Pleased to meet you,” Ivan said, still pressing his back against the wall.

“Glad to meet you too,” Father Buca said. “Well, I’m really tired. Good night.”

After Father Buca entered his apartment, Chelsea quickly kissed Ivan on the cheek.

“Thank you for a wonderful first date,” she said. “I’m kinda tired too, but we must do this again. Just look for me in the restaurant.”

“Uh, uh — ”

Chelsea opened the door, rushed into her apartment, and shut the door, all in a few seconds. She giggled as she bolted the lock.

Her great-great-grandfather’s ghost appeared.

“Young lady, where have you been?” Abraham demanded.

“I’ve been on a date,” Chelsea said. “You know, girl meets boy, boy spends ton of money on girl, boy hopes girl will put out, and girl denies sex to boy but promises it for next time. And then the cycle starts over again.”

Abraham grunted. “I viewed your suitor briefly before you shut the door in his face. He looks like Dracula!”

“Oh, knock it off,” Chelsea said. “He’s just a millionaire diamond dealer from Romania.”

Abraham gasped. “Romania! I knew it.”

“You know nothing. He’s just some horny guy who thinks I’m hot.”

“He’s King of the Undead!”

“Oh, he’s not undead. He’s definitely alive. I know because I felt his hardness when I ground my butt against his groin when we were dirty dancing.”

Abraham looked aghast, and Chelsea grinned.

“Oh, come off it, stop obsessing over a dead vampire and just go to heaven,” Chelsea said.

The ghost frowned at her. “I cannot rest in peace until I am satisfied that Dracula, King of the Vampires, is destroyed.”

“He’s been a dead undead person for over a hundred years. Go to your afterlife and get out of my life.”

“What an ungrateful brood I have sired! None of you have taken up the family tradition,” Abraham said. “Do you realize that only my constant vigilance against Dracula has guaranteed the survival of our family?”

“The survival of our family?” Chelsea said. She laughed and pointed at a photo of her parents. “What family? You broke up Mom and Dad’s marriage.”

“I had to ensure that Dracula and his acolytes were not stalking them,” Abraham said.

“They got tired of you dropping in on them,” Chelsea said. “And you also broke up Granddad and Grandma.”

Abraham’s face remained stern. “Unfortunately, your grandparents also did not appreciate my protection of our family.”

“We have no family. There’s only a lot of divorced singles,” Chelsea said. “*You’ve* destroyed the family.”

The air suddenly turned ice cold, and a strong draft blew through the apartment. But Chelsea did not fear these ghostly threats.

“And I, the last direct descendant of yours, can’t even keep a boyfriend because you keep scaring them away,” Chelsea said. “Our family’s going extinct on its own.”

“Such disrespect!” Abraham scolded.

“I’m not going to become another divorced, depressed, drunk, single, sexually dysfunctional Van Helsing,” Chelsea said. “I’ll go to a normal college, I’ll get a normal college degree, I’ll get a normal job, I’ll get a normal boyfriend, and I’ll live a normal life.”

Abraham sneered and wagged his finger. “Young lady, you are taking a great risk with your life — ”

“Get out now!” Chelsea said.

With a poof sound, Abraham’s ghost disappeared, and Chelsea stormed into the bedroom.

The next morning, Chelsea knocked on Father Buca’s door. When the priest opened the door, she smiled and gave him a coupon.

“Here’s a coupon for ten free chicken wings,” she said.

“Ah, thank you,” Father Buca said.

“And by the way, I know you’re not Catholic, but do you eat fish on Fridays?” Chelsea asked. “I can get you a big fish sandwich on the house. I have just one more request...”

Father Buca slowly walked into Chelsea’s apartment and looked around. Clutching a large silver cross, he said, “I’ll try my best at this, but this is my first time. We Orthodox don’t do this often. Catholics have a lot more experience with exorcisms.”

“Uh, they do?” Chelsea said, wondering if Father Buca was the best choice for the ritual.

“But don’t worry, I know how to do this — I think. I did some research on Eastern Orthodox prayers of exorcism. Those should do the trick. Well, I hope they work.”

“Okay, let’s get started,” Chelsea said.

Father Buca held out a bottle of holy water and sprinkled it around the apartment. “Father O’Hara from Introduction to Catholicism 101 says this stuff really works.”

“Paging Abraham Van Helsing, paging Abraham Van Helsing,” Chelsea said. “Mr. Van Helsing, please report to the apartment.”

The ghost of Abraham Van Helsing suddenly appeared in front of Father Buca.

Father Buca screamed and dropped the holy water bottle. “You weren’t kidding, there really is a ghost here!”

Abraham looked confused. “What is a priest doing here? Are you holding a religious ritual without consulting me?”

Father Buca held the cross out to the ghost. With his other hand, he pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and chanted in Greek.

“What is this man saying?” Abraham said. “It’s all Greek to me.”

“He doesn’t understand Greek,” Chelsea said.

“Oh, dear,” Father Buca muttered. He turned over the paper. “Okay, I downloaded the

English translation too.”

“What is going on here?” Abraham asked.

“Hail, God of Abraham. Hail, God of Isaac. Hail, God of Jacob. Jesus the righteous Holy Spirit Son of the Father,” Father Buca said.

The temperature in the room plummeted, and a cold draft blew across the room. Abraham stared at Father Buca and Chelsea.

“Again I ask you, young lady, what is going on?” Abraham said.

“It’s an ancient Christian liturgy of exorcism, fourth century, originally in Greek and Coptic,” Chelsea said.

“An exorcism!” Abraham said, his eyes lighting up like fire. “How dare you subject me to a sacrament for driving out evil demons!”

“Come out, demon, whoever you may be. Stay away from Chelsea Van Helsing’s home,” Father Buca said.

The air turned freezing cold, and the draft grew stronger and swirled around the apartment and knocked over a vase. The coldness whipped Chelsea’s face and hair.

“Oh my God, it’s cold in here,” Father Buca said. “Oh, where was I? Ah, here it is: Quickly! Now! Come out, demon!”

Abraham scowled. “I have devoted my whole life and afterlife to exterminating creatures of evil. I have destroyed scores of the undead, the vilest of Satan’s spawn. I have killed Dracula. And now you treat me as a Hell-born demon.”

Already a semi-transparent ghost, Abraham became wisper as Father Buca chanted.

The air above Abraham turned blood red and spun around. Like smoke being sucked into an exhaust fan, the ghost stretched and drifted up to the whirlwind.

“It is that boyfriend of yours, the Romanian. He turned you against me!” Abraham yelled. “You are making a mistake! You are not in love! You are under his hypnotic spell! By the time you swear your eternal love for him, and he swears that he will never hurt you, make a note of this: both of you are lying!”

The whirlwind spun faster. Abraham groaned. Then suddenly, the whirlwind sucked him in and disappeared. The air shot back up to normal temperature, and the draft stopped blowing.

Father Buca sat down. His hand trembled as he put the cross down on a table.

“Well, at least nobody vomited green bile on me, and nobody’s head turned around a

hundred and eighty degrees,” he said. “My goodness, you have such unusual requests.”

“Thank you so much,” Chelsea said. “Your next big fish sandwich at Hooters is on the house.”

“Thank you,” Father Buca said. He looked at his watch. “Ah, I better leave soon. It’s my turn to celebrate the noon Mass at St. Constantine’s.”

“Is that St. Constantine’s Romanian Orthodox Church downtown?” Chelsea asked. “Does it have a gift shop?”

That evening, when the night shift ended at the restaurant, Chelsea phoned the number on the Carfax Jewelers business card.

“Hello?” Ivan answered.

“Hi, Ivan. This is Chelsea.”

“Ah, the most beautiful and glamorous woman I have met in my travels.”

Chelsea chuckled. “Yep, that’s me, though I don’t feel so glamorous by the end of the night shift. I hope I didn’t wake you up.”

“No, not at all,” Ivan said. “I was working. I often work late.”

He’s still awake at two in the morning, Chelsea thought. He’ll certainly agree to go to an after-hours dance club that stays open until dawn.

“I’ll be free tomorrow night,” she cooed. “In case you didn’t notice, I really love dancing. I could dance the whole night away. Want to take me dancing again?”

“I would love to, my dear.”

“Way cool. By the way, did I tell you that I took jewelry design a year ago? A night class at community college, that’s all. Could you bring some more diamond and gold stuff? I really want to see some of your designs.”

True to her word, Chelsea kept Ivan dancing the whole night. Eventually, she wanted a drink and dragged him away from the crowded dance floor and to a table.

“Wow, most guys can’t keep up with me,” she said. “You’ve been dancing for hours. You’ve got such stamina.”

“I do not tire easily,” Ivan said. “I can maintain a girl’s pleasure for a very long time.”

“Oooh, I bet you can.”

Chelsea raised the banana daiquiri to her lips. There was a banana stuck in the drink. She plucked out the banana and slowly sucked it while looking at Ivan.

Ivan stared into Chelsea's eyes. "You want me, you want me, you want me," he repeated.

With a banana in her mouth, Chelsea stared back at Ivan and felt herself become drowsy. Her jaw dropped, and the banana fell to the floor.

"Oops, what a klutz I am," Chelsea said.

She stood up, turned her back to Ivan, and bent over at the waist to pick up the banana. She knew that her black miniskirt was so short that it would ride up and expose her red thong panties and her butt, but she didn't care if Ivan caught a glimpse under her skirt.

She sat back down, crossed her legs, put the banana on the table, and picked up her glass.

"Uh, where were we?"

Ivan took a deep breath, stared into her eyes again, and said, "You want me, you want me, you want me..."

Chelsea looked into Ivan's eyes. Then she tipped her glass and spilled her drink over herself.

"Oh, my top! It's all wet and sticky," she said as she grabbed a napkin. She patted the napkin against her low-cut gold halter top. "Oh, I got wet and sticky in there too," she said as she wiped her cleavage. "And I'm wet and sticky there too," she said as she wiped her bare midriff.

"I heard about American girls being hard to get, but this is ridiculous," Ivan said.

"Okay, I'm finished wiping myself," Chelsea said. "Hey, were you watching me wipe my breasts and belly?"

"Yes, how could I not look at you?" Ivan said with a smirk.

Chelsea straightened her back and thrust her breasts forward. "And did you see anything you like?"

Ivan leaned over and kissed and licked her neck. Chelsea closed her eyes and purred softly. She gyrated slowly and sensuously as Ivan ran his hands over her back, her arms, her belly, and her breasts.

She felt the hardness of his teeth upon the soft skin of her neck.

With a giggle, she pushed herself away and flipped her hair. She motioned at the scores of people packed onto the dance floor, sitting at tables, and clustered around the bar.

"This place is way too crowded to be a make-out spot," she said. "Why don't we go back to my place?"

“Okay, let’s go,” Ivan said as he rose from his chair.

“And you can show me your jewelry samples too,” Chelsea reminded him as she grabbed her handbag.

When they entered the apartment, Ivan groped her and nuzzled her neck. She pulled herself away and laughed. A frustrated, desperate frown appeared on Ivan’s face.

“Oh, you horny hound, not in here,” she said. “Let’s do it in the bedroom.”

Ivan’s lips curled into a smile. As he parted his lips, Chelsea saw how brilliantly white and long were his teeth.

Chelsea grabbed his hand and pulled him towards the bedroom. She giggled, spun around to his back, squeezed his butt, and pushed him into the room. She rushed into the room and slammed the door shut.

Ivan gasped and threw his hands in front of his eyes.

Silver and wooden crosses and crucifixes covered the bedroom walls. Strings of garlic hung from the window curtains. Jars of water sat on her dresser and desk.

“I wanted to redecorate my apartment, so I bought some crosses at a church’s gift shop,” Chelsea said. “Aren’t they pretty?”

Ivan hissed and spun around to face Chelsea. She pulled a water pistol out of her handbag and squirted jets of water into his eyes.

He screamed as his eyes turned red. Wisps of white smoke rose from his eyes. He threw his hands over his face.

“Holy water from the church,” Chelsea said. “It’s free.”

Ivan staggered towards her, and she ran to her dresser and its jars of water. She picked up a jar and flung water on Ivan’s hands. His skin turned black as charcoal, and smoke rose from his hands.

Howling with pain, he threw his hands into the air. Chelsea splashed water on Ivan’s face.

As Ivan shrieked, his cheeks turned black like his hands. Cracks and boils appeared all over his face, and white smoke and red blood oozed from the wounds. Chelsea smelled the stench of burning skin.

She pressed her back against the door, blocking the exit from the room.

Ivan dropped his jaw, raised his upper lip, and exposed his long, canine fangs. He snarled

like a wolf as smoke kept rising from his face.

“Cheap hussy,” Ivan said. “I could have given you sensual pleasures beyond your imagination. I could have given you eternal life free of mortal pain. I could have made you Queen of the Undead.”

Chelsea shrugged. “Queen of the Undead sounds awesome, but I’ll settle for being Miss Hooters of Cocoa Beach.”

Ivan lunged at her. Chelsea darted away from the door. Ivan slammed face first into the door, which was covered with crosses and strings of garlic.

He howled as the garlic and crosses burned his face and hands. As Ivan clutched his cheeks, Chelsea rammed a chair into his chest, and he fell onto his back.

Chelsea grabbed a mallet and a wooden stake. She rushed to Ivan and held the stake over the left side of his chest.

“Toys from the family,” she said.

Chelsea slammed the mallet down on the stake. As the stake plunged into Ivan’s heart, he screamed, and a geyser of blood gushed from his chest.

Chelsea panted as she fell to the floor. “Whew, that was close!” she said as she wiped the vampire’s blood and her own sweat off her forehead.

She crawled back beside the vampire, who was groaning and twitching on the floor. Still panting, Chelsea plucked the golden dragon brooch off his Armani jacket.

“You should never have come back, Dracula,” Chelsea said. “Everyone except great-great-granddad thought you were dead. When you showed up, I had to kill you.”

She reached into his pockets and grabbed the diamond pendants, bracelets, and rings.

“This won’t pay for all the emotional trouble you’ve made for my family, but it’ll help pay for college,” she said. “I’ll get a normal life. Nobody in my family could live a normal life while you and my great-great-grandfather loitered in the land of the living.”

“Your great-great-grandfather?” Dracula murmured.

“Oh, too bad the bikini pageant poster doesn’t show my last name. It’s Van Helsing,” said Chelsea.

Dracula groaned and gripped the stake. He convulsed as he tried to pull it out.

Chelsea went to the window and grabbed the window curtains. “You know what I like about that after-hours dance club? You can dance all night ‘til dawn.”

She pulled open the curtains and let the sunlight pour into the room. Dracula wailed as light bathed him. His skin and flesh began crumbling into grey ashes, exposing his bones. Minutes later, only a pile of grey ashes and a black Armani suit remained of the King of the Vampires.

Chelsea smiled. “The Van Helsing may be dysfunctional, but at least we have a family tradition.”