

This story contains mature themes and situations. I guess this is where I say no one under 18 admitted without parent or guardian.

The Worst Christian: Installment II

The Post War Years

"How you feeling?"

The lights of the club swirled all around us. I had been sitting at the bar for over an hour drinking gin and tonics trying to get loaded. "Nowhere near numb enough!" The throbbing music left me shouting over some pumping bass of an antiquated goth bit. How long had it been since one of the DJ's bought a new album?

Poppy pulled out a cigarette. I yanked my refueled Zippo out of my pocket before she could reach her matches.

" It's interesting to have you back"

Interesting?

She turned mid draw off her cigarette as her boyfriend sat down next to her. I never really got on with him. Him and his gother than thou attitude. Well that and the fact I had always seen him as a vaguely better version of myself. Better clothes, better style, and at least six inches taller. He seemed to pull off the heroine junky look better than I ever did. Vanity can be such a cruel mistress

To be honest I really can not say that I had ever heard before, or since, then one good thing said about him. However Poppy liked him, and Poppy was one of the few people I felt were worthwhile in the world; so I decided to give him a shot.

She turned back toward me, "How's the new job?"

"Good, I guess. They pay me ungodly money to rehash crap."

"Who was it again?" Her significant other began leaching money for a drink.

"Uh,..." I paused to watch, my loathing growing. "The, er, Washington Times. I am doing movie reviews. As well as some other assorted trash." I held a twenty into the air trying to attract a bartender. "They are paying me stupid cash."

"You just said that."

The bartender came over with a double gin and tonic. And took his order for a whiskey sour. "So I did."

"Anyway it's not even movie reviews really. You know the condensed versions that are in weekend supplements and shit like that?" Poppy nodded.

"Yeah well I'm doing all that kind of crap."

"Fuck, that's cool." She smiled warmly at me. *Sigh* A very nice smile indeed

"Thanks."

She gestured at my drink with hers, "What's that make?"

"This would make three doubles and two single, and none of them add up to enough." I touched the corner of my watch and the face lit a pale blue. Five drinks in an hour and a half, not bad. "I think I am about ready to go for the straight Sapphire."

"Some things never change" She swiveled around in her chair to talk to Serge, the boyfriend.

I turned myself to scan the bar. It had filled out a little bit in my absence. I could remember when nobody came out to Monday nights, and here it was almost packed. Not anywhere near what "Get Back" nights were. Still I was pretty impressed by the new crop of dark children.

Normally a college crowd bar Metro was packed with crap. It hung from the ceiling and covered every available inch of wall. Inflatable dinosaurs, motorcycles, surf boards, and televisions hung from the ceiling; often at odd angles, all of it covered in a thick layer of the nastiest grime I can really imagine. The walls were little better mirrored and bedecked with beer signs, street signs, and sirens selling beer. Here a hubcap, there a flyer promoting some more popular and marketable evening.

It always reminded me of all those cheesy restaurants that try to create a homey, fun feel by decking the place out in faux Americana. Seems that there has always been a new chain of them opening. All of them delivering the same kind of food, with the same service at the same prices. The banal stupidity of culture has never ceased to amaze me.

I cast my eye over to Serge and Poppy. They seemed to be having terse words. Surprise. Poppy is a lovely girl, always has been, but stability has never been a her strong suit. I re-surfed the crowd over the rim of my gin and tonic. Amidst the pulsing lights and lasers I looked for someone attractive, anyone.

The crowd offered up its usual stew of androgynous boys and girls with a few punks, dashed in for flavor.

And of course there way too many vampires. They seemed to be everywhere these days the covers of all the trendiest magazines had sported a full splash at some time or another. Vampires, feh. Stupid cult. The idea of writing something mean spirited about them as filler for the paper crossed my mind. This, I realized, was proof that the alcohol was kicking in.

Poppy and Serge were beginning to go at it with some venom, had to be that crazy red hot Ohio blood. Serge got disgusted about something, grabbed his drink, and stalked off into the crowd, unapologetically shoving over painted vampires out of his way. Maybe he was not all that bad after all. Poppy was already digging out another cigarette, a clove this time. She offered one up to

me.

I took it then lit both of our cigarettes. The thickly spiced smoke made me think of the middle east. Not the real middle east but the stories of Ali Baba, and Aladdin; that middle east.

"So what was that all about?"

Poppy was smiling as she sucked on her cigarette. "Nothing, we do it all the time, beats the hell out of talking about the weather."

I looked at her and for a moment the entire weight of the of my world and my life seemed to crush down upon me. I involuntarily slumped forward in my seat under the weight of the honesty. Things crystallized in the dark recesses of my thoughts. The fear of it all struck me and I nearly lapsed into tears.

"You all right?" Poppy's hand was on my shoulder.

"Yeah fine just some smoke in my eyes." I clenched my eyes a bit to add drama to the lie.

"You know you're not the same Shade I used to know." Poppy started in. I looked at her quizzically as she continued. "You have been completely different ever since you came back from the war. But I suppose that war will do things like that to people." She turned and ordered up another drink.