

[David Lance POV]

After dealing with the injured man, ensuring his condition was stable enough for him to wait for an ambulance, I left the inn to investigate, quickly rushing to the forest, following an old road of packed dirt that conveniently led to my destination.

Sending a drone beforehand to scan the area to determine whether I would be allowed to use my powers or not. It all relied on how desolated the forest currently was.

Within a minute or two of following the road, I reached the edge of the forest, where I came to a full stop, my muscles tensing for the run. Feeling my heart pound without clear reason.

Fear perhaps?

I sighed, shaking my head with a small frown on my head.

Something here was off.

I was afraid, even though I had no idea what awaited me behind those trees, behind the ever-growing shadows that seemed to expand in an unnatural way through the vegetation.

I had many problems, many things to work through, but crippling cowardice wasn't one of them.

Meaning... whatever lurked in the forest was to blame for this.

I was more than intrigued now. A beast capable of inducing fear in others from afar. That sounded like something Scarecrow would keep in his apartment as his pet.

Brushing off the fear trying to cripple my actions, I rushed inside the forest, running through the trail while taking a good look around, surveying every little detail that could lead me to whatever or whoever had attacked the man back at the inn.

Coming to a full stop, as I came face to face with a corpse resting against a tree. The foul, putrid smell of the same being so thick it almost choked me. The victim was a woman, around her twenties, covered in wounds with blood and pus, her white skin, now black in most places, glistening with corruption.

At this horrid sight. An involuntary shiver ran down my spine.

The wounds, the pattern of attacks, and more. It all matched the man I had treated.

Based on the blood around her corpse alone, she was attacked just around the same time the man had been. However, unlike the man, her wounds had reached necrosis at an alarming speed, based on how she looked.

A necrotizing infection causes patches of tissue to die. These infections are most commonly the result of harmful bacteria invading the skin or the tissues under it. If untreated, they can and, in most cases, will cause death in a matter of hours. Infections of this kind are fairly rare.

Pushing through the foul smell, I reached the corpse, kneeling to its side, pulling my thermometer and a glove to get the corpse's temperature in order to determine the time of death.

94.5 Fahrenheit.

34.7 Celsius.

She died roughly two hours ago.

At least according to basic forensics. For a more accurate result, I would require a forensic doctor.

I didn't have one on my belt. So, I was using the formula.

The formula states that the body loses around 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit per hour, so the rectal temperature is subtracted from the normal body temperature of 98 degrees. Then, the difference between the two is divided by 1.5, and that final number is used to approximate the time since death.

Hence, the two hours.

Based on that and what I could deduce from the man, I was almost certain the culprit was still somewhere around.

Inspecting the corpse a bit more before continuing with my journey, I found her ID on her pants, in the left pocket, alongside her wallet.

Name: Evelyn Grace.

Age: 23.  
Organ Donor.  
Law student.  
Allergic to peanuts and butter.  
For emergencies call 987-XXX-XXXX.

I grabbed my phone, taking a few pictures of her information to ensure her family had some kind of closure.

“Tandem venisti,” A throaty growl thunders behind me; the sound was deep and menacing, it spoke of demonic power and primal savagery, but worse than that, it spoke of insatiable hunger.

Instincts kicking in, I jumped to my feet, arming my portable staff with a single swing out of my pocket.

In front of me, a few meters away, an unholy abomination stood; the monster towered over the trees, each arm so long it could effortlessly envelop a bus, his bony face wider than any animal or beast I had ever seen, its mouth gaping, showing long deadly jagged teeth.

“Mors. Renaissance. Servitus.” The beast hissed, taking a step forward, dragging his unnaturally long arms through the earth.

I frowned, taking a step back. The beast was speaking in Latin, meaning it's safe to assume it's a demon; beyond that, it seemed like it had been waiting for me, as Tandem Venisti roughly translates to; finally, you have arrived.

The last few words the demon whispered, Death, Rebirth, and Slavery, alongside the fact it had been waiting for me, were clear indicators all of this had been a trap to lure me into the forest.

Whatever that thing was, it wanted me.

Taking another step back as the creature neared, I sent a signal to the drone I had sent to scan the forest, using my watch, in order to find how loose I could play this out.

[No humans in a 22-mile radius.]

So, I can whisper.

Good to know.

“Mors. Renaissance. Servitus.” The monster repeated, with each step he took my way, making the very earth beneath him tremble.

I smiled, taking a deep breath, as I looked into the sky briefly, the sounds of the demon approaching me becoming more and more alarming.

Today it would be the first time I use that willingly. I have to admit, in a way, it felt liberating.

“Mors. Renaissance. Servitus.”

“Pedicabo ego vos....” I muttered in clear Latin, aiming at the demon. Destroying several miles of forest, leaving nothing but a roughly leveled field of rocks and dust, all signs of green and life gone as far as the eye could see.

I never really imagined my first willing word in years would be fuck you in Latin.

It's almost poetic.

“Mors. Renaissance. Servitus...”

That thing was still alive?