

LILITH'S LOVE

by Dan Shaurette

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To the gem I cherish most.

*Everything comes full circle,
and this book is no exception.
To be sure, this book is dedicated to
all of the women in my life;
no list could ever be complete.*

Prologue

This story is true. The names have been changed to protect the innocent and the not-so-innocent. The places really exist. The events truly took place. The lives remain wholly affected more than a decade later.

Again, I wish to thank Donovan for the use of his journal entries, and Chris, Anna and Lilith for allowing me to tell their story, even though it was so long ago. This is their story. They have other stories, and, if they allow me to, perhaps I will visit them and write their stories down again. I would be very honored.

Let it be known: it would be foolish to dismiss these events lightly. If *DRACULA* taught us anything, it is that Humanity needs to be reminded that vampires do exist. Friend or foe; angel or devil; lover or lethal -- they are among us. This remains as true as when Stoker collected his friends' diary entries.

Cases of vampirism and witchcraft have been demonstrated and validated throughout the centuries and across the borders of many lands. The faiths of many have been tested, and have proved that vampirism and witchcraft are more than legend. "If these proofs are in error, then," as Ambrose Bierce put it, "Human Testimony and Reason are alike destitute of value."

“*Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?’ he asked.
 ‘Begin at the beginning,’ the King said, gravely,
 ‘and go on till you come to the end: then stop.’”*
 -- Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Chapter One

The monitor crackled to life when Donovan turned it on. As his computer came on next, he heard the hard drive spin up, a sound that was music to his ears. Then a small tune played, announcing that his computer had booted up and was ready.

Late last night, Donovan finished his latest program, an electronic journal. His friend Christian called it “Don’s Digital Diary” as a joke, but Donovan called it his “McJournal”; a play on his surname, McElroy. Double-clicking on the “McJournal” icon brought up a dark, foreboding picture with a message in bright, blood-red letters that spelled:

LASCIATE OGNI SPERANZA, VOI, CH’ENTRATE!

Confused, Chris asked, “What is that? It looks Greek to me.”

Don snickered and said, “Actually, it’s Italian . . . ‘Abandon all hope, ye that enter here!’”

Chris stopped for a second then realized its source and proclaimed triumphantly, “Ah! *Dante’s Inferno* . . . engraved outside the entrance to Hell. Where did you find the original Italian version?”

Don sneered comically and replied, “I’ve studied more than Computer Science, y’know!”

Chris laughed and said, “Perhaps it should be ‘Dante’s Digital Diary.’” Then, seeing Donovan’s rather odd smirk, added, “Or perhaps not.” Don’s grin widened, and Chris laughed again.

Don entered his password, and Chris wanted to laugh out loud when he saw how long it was. He couldn’t read it because only a string of asterisks appeared on the screen and Don typed too fast for Chris to

read his keystrokes. Chris said, "You're kidding, right? What's with such a long password? How long is it?"

"It's 29 characters long . . . ought to keep even you out of it." Then he added, "But don't panic. I wrote the program to set up multiple journals, each with unique passwords possible."

Chris thought that was cool, but wasn't sure why Don did this for him. After trying to think of a clever retort, and failing, he gave up, and simply asked, "So -- ?"

Don smirked. "So you can use this program, too. That is, if you'd like an electronic journal. I'm not sure what I'd write in it, but I thought it'd be cool to have, just in case."

"Just in case of *what*, pray tell?"

"Just in case anything exciting should ever happen, God forbid." The two laughed together over that thought. Chris gave Don a pat on the back and said, "Thanks, Don. I suppose I could find a use for it . . . even if it is just to figure out what your bloody password is. Ha!" Then he bolted out of the room in a classic slapstick retreat.

Donovan McElroy and Christian Armstrong had known each other since the sixth grade. Even back then, Chris was the skinny one and Don was overweight. They reminded people even then of some classic comic duos. At times, however, it was hard to tell which was the silly one and which one delivered the setup. Their fellow Arizona natives might have compared them to Wallace & Ladmo. Others might consider Abbott & Costello or Laurel & Hardy.

Don enjoyed having his best friend live with him. He could never seem to thank Chris enough for moving in and keeping him company after his parents died. In fact, Donovan decided that would be his first entry in his new journal -- the events leading up to his parents' death and Chris' moving in.

* * *

McJournal Entry for 10/06/93

It was a dark and stormy night . . . well it had been, for an October night in Phoenix. I thought my car was gonna float away . . . with ME in it! I mean, really, 19th Avenue and Grand was a bloody lake! If this weather keeps up, it's gonna be another wet Fair. I can't wait . . . The State Fair will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Ferris Wheel (about the only ride I'll go on, hehehe). Okay, okay . . . let's try the intro again...

Dear Diary,

Oh, I know that's cliché, too, but it fits better than the first one. Anyway, I just thought I'd tell you how this year of 1993 has treated me, so far.

Christian Armstrong, my friend since grade school -- y'know, the one who moved to California eons ago, or so it seems. He called me one mid-winter's evening, somewhere around the middle of January. He gave me great news -- he wanted to strike out on his own, and wanted to move back to Phoenix! This year has really been a roller-coaster, if I may continue with the Fair motif, but it started here on a very high point.

Of course, I helped him move his things into storage when he arrived -- it was the least I could do. He stayed with his grandparents here in town until he was able to find a good job. He didn't want to live off anyone, but he appreciated the offer to stay as long as he needed. He didn't intend to stay too long. He really wanted to make it on his own . . . I admired that.

I was twenty and I still lived with my parents, which Chris could never understand -- that is, how anyone could be dependent on their

parents THAT long. Little did either of us expect that this would change as soon as it did.

I turned 21 in February, and Chris and I celebrated by his buying me dinner -- he had found a job! A great one, too. So it was a dual celebration. Secretly that night, my parents were coming home from the store with things needed to throw me a surprise birthday party. I learned later that Chris and my parents had planned the surprise party together.

When Chris and I got back to my place, we weren't greeted by my parents yelling "SURPRISE," but by a totally dark and quiet house. Chris looked puzzled and jumped nervously when we heard a knock on the door behind us. A policeman standing there asked which one of us was Donovan Andrew McElroy. I stepped forward, nervously bracing myself for bad news . . . I wasn't strong enough for what he told me. He said that my parents were killed in a car accident -- the victims of a drunk driver, who was also killed in the crash. Thank God Chris was there to help me. I was in such shock that my mind didn't fully comprehend what had happened, or what the future would hold. This was the lowest point on the roller coaster of 1993.

Fortunately, I had smart, caring parents who had planned for . . . well, their eventual time. Funeral arrangements made in advance placed them in plots next to each other. Their wills left everything to me, as I was their only child. The house was now mine, as well as enough money to pay for the remaining part of my college education and other bills. Of course, I would need to get a job eventually. For now, however, I could rest easy, knowing that they cared this much for me. The roller coaster was tilting up again.

Chris told me that he'd be there for me when I needed him, and, well, I asked him a favor . . . a major favor. I asked him if he'd found a place of his own yet. When he heard the question, he smiled, knowing what I'd ask him next, and he said he'd be happy to move in with me. I thanked him, and I felt closer to him than I ever felt to anyone. He's a true friend.

He's lived here ever since. We've been keeping an eye on the house next door. I figure that he'll again want to move out on his own when he can afford it. The house next door was open to renters for a couple months, but now the real estate company has put it up for sale. I wonder if Chris still has designs to move there now that it's for sale.

At any rate, he's lived here for about eight months now, and I'm glad that he's here.

Update you later, Diary . . . hasta!

P.S. Chris . . . if you ever crack my password and read this . . . I'll hunt you down and . . . and . . . make you watch "Beverly Hills, 90210" . . . so help me!

* * *

The storm picked up strength again so Don stopped there and headed on to bed. That night, Don dreamed. Don always dreamed, but he rarely remembered anything of consequence. He liked to believe that the ones he *could* remember came true. It had happened before, as did many stranger things.

That night he had a dream about a beautiful woman who beckoned him to her. Every night, Don had similar dreams, each ending before he could reach her. The circumstances were different, the settings, too, but the same beautiful, copper-reddish-haired woman always called to him.

Don woke abruptly the next morning to the annoying squeal of his hated alarm clock. "Just five more minutes," he whimpered, but the

alarm never relented until Don got out of bed to shut it up. By that time, Don was up and moving, and figured he might as well just keep going.

He moved on towards the bathroom, ready to take a shower, not remembering a single event from his dream. He only had the distinct feeling that with five more minutes' sleep he might have had a satisfying night's rest.