

Chapter 1

The Williamsburg Mortuary and Crematorium is in the perfect location for an enterprise dealing with the disposal of the dead. The members of the Brooklyn New York clan, collectively, own and operate the business. It is a family-run establishment.

About a mile northeast of the Mortuary is the Kosciusko Bridge, which separates the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. Just over the bridge is the largest cemetery in the United States, Calvary Cemetery, covering 365 acres and containing three million graves. To the west of this Roman Catholic cemetery is the 78 acres of the Jewish Mt. Zion Cemetery with over 200,000 burials.

The neighborhood of Williamsburg is at the northern tip of Brooklyn. It is nestled between the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and the East River, across from Lower Manhattan. Beyond the building is a view of the midtown Manhattan skyline. The Empire State Building stands out amongst the smaller buildings below 34th Street.

The East River runs between the New York City borough of Brooklyn and the island of Manhattan. The Williamsburg Bridge, Manhattan Bridge, and beyond them the iconic Brooklyn Bridge, are overshadowed by the skyscrapers of Wall Street and the Financial District. Towering above them all is the new One World Trade Center, the main building of the rebuilt complex in lower Manhattan.

Not everyone in the Brooklyn New York clan works at the Mortuary and Crematorium. But today most of the family had gathered to mourn the death of Valton. Like most members of the clan, Valton should have lived to the age of two hundred, but his life was cut short by a drunk driver. At least, that was the story.



In the basement of the antiquated stone building, the moans of the soon-to-be deceased victim echoed throughout the dank, dark, mostly empty cellar. Within her last fragments of consciousness, she somehow managed to recognize that her life was dripping away. Her struggles for the last half hour had been futile. Strong white surgical tape bound her to the old, rusty gurney. The tape keeping her head in place served two purposes. It held her head motionless and covered the thick gauze over her eyes that kept her blind to what was happening to her. The small white washcloth, pushed deep into her mouth, silenced all but the loudest whimpers.

She was not alone in that moldy, unpleasant, cinderblock-walled vault. Two members of

the Brooklyn New York clan had been the ones to securely restrain her and now were in control of her fate. They were Gorstrum, a necessary but shunned cabal of untouchables who served the clan. Their function was to perform the wretched and repulsive tasks that needed to be done, and that the other members of the clan preferred not to do. One of those responsibilities was finding and sharing victims for the family's ancient rituals and sustenance.

Usually, there were clan members assigned to work the old crematorium ovens in the dimly lit, grimy cellar. But when they were not available, the Gorstrum would fill in. There were no cremations scheduled for today. However, the two Gorstrum were there with other duties to perform.

The two young men appeared to be in their twenties but were actually almost twice as old. They were unshaven and unwashed, dressed in soiled jeans, tee shirts and dirty athletic shoes. They had not been invited to the funerary service taking place behind the building. However, for this occasion, they had done their duty and acquired a victim for the clan to consume.

The two Gorstrum had years of practice and knew their revolting business well. They were talented hunters. Together they had set out early in the morning, just after sunrise, when the streets of Williamsburg were mostly deserted. They had driven their inconspicuous panel truck to a stretch of road behind an abandoned warehouse. They parked at the curb but kept the engine running.

She was a middle-aged Hispanic woman, more than a bit on the fleshy side, out for a morning jog. She used earbuds so she could listen to her too loud music as she ran, and didn't notice their stealthy approach.

She was easy to capture. As the younger one slowly drove the truck, the older one quietly hopped out and soundlessly ran behind her, matching her speed. She gasped when his strong left arm reached around her head to cover her mouth and suppress her screams.

In his right hand was his karambit knife, a super sharp instrument with a hawklike blade. His had been handed down through generations of his ancestors. He was prepared to cut her, if she struggled too much, but that would have been messy and was to be avoided.

His left arm pulled her head back and she fell to the ground, hitting the rear of her skull on the concrete sidewalk with an awful loud thud. The ensuing concussion and the surprise of the attack disoriented her giving him enough time to place his knife back in its sheath and reach into the back pocket of his filthy jeans.

He carefully withdrew the syringe he had placed there this morning. He removed the protective plastic covering with his teeth, jabbed the needle into the side of her neck and depressed the plunger. It was filled with a powerful, fast-acting sedative. She was unconscious in

a matter of seconds.

Overall, it took him less than ten seconds to seize, sedate, and heave her into the back of the truck.

Now she was just another bound and gagged victim struggling on an old rusty gurney. She was still alive but that condition wouldn't last much longer. A needle had been roughly inserted into the brachial artery in her upper arm. It was attached to a tube that ended in a flask on the floor. Her blood was being rapidly drained.

The older one stared at the flask as it filled with the ruby-colored, life-giving liquid. It gave life to humans and extended the lives of the members of the clan. He licked his lips as he impatiently waited to take a swig of the dark red elixir.

The younger one sat on the old stained couch next to the cremation ovens. He distracted himself by cleaning his filthy fingernails with the pointed tip of his own cherished karambit knife. The curved knife was the preferred weapon of the members of the clan. He had been presented with his after being allowed to attend his first Blood Moon. With years of practice, it had become a lethal weapon in the hands of this trained huntsman.

"Whose funeral is it?" he asked, not bothering to look up.

"Valton," the older one answered.

"Too bad. His son is a good guy. He's always been nice to us."

"I think they were originally from the Las Vegas clan."

"I hear we have some really nice-looking cousins out there. By the way, are we invited to the funeral?" the younger one asked.

"What do you think? They don't want Gorstrum hanging around. We would make the whole ceremony unclean." He thought for a moment then added, "We'll have to have our own party."

As if on cue, the Hispanic woman started to spasm. The loss of blood activated her body's response. In a few moments, she was still.

"Damn it! Did she die already?"

"Yeah. But you know what they say, waste not, want not."

The older one knelt down to remove the tube that was still filling the flask on the floor. He placed the tube in his mouth and sucked up the last remnants of her blood. Almost immediately he felt the effects of the human blood as his digestive organs processed the life-

giving liquid. He smiled as he undid his belt, and started to lower his pants.