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Doug Crowell

THE LIVING VAMPIRE

The two young women walking down the street were quite taken by the handsome young man walking down the street before them. The blond woman poked her companion in the ribs with a wool-covered elbow. The brunette winked at her companion, and nodded. At the next intersection all three—the handsome man and the two women—were forced to stop by the flow of traffic. As they approached the back of the handsome young man now stopped at the curb, the two young women separated slightly and too approached the curb, one to either side of the handsome man. He stared straight ahead, toward the DON'T WALK sign across the street, while both of the young women turned their heads—one to the right, one to the left—to glance boldly at the profile of the handsome young man. The sign across the street then flashed WALK and the young man strode boldly and quickly forward. The two young women came back together, and continued walking down the street, still in the same direction, still behind the handsome man who strode still before them. The brunette woman now poked her companion in the ribs, placed a fingertip at a certain spot on her upper lip, and raised her eyebrows. The brunette's companion nodded. The blond woman too had noticed, when the handsome young man had yawned, the extended bicuspid in the handsome young man's mouth. The blond young woman moved her face into a shape resembling a certain well-known movie creature and made a snarling, biting gesture, at the back of the handsome young man who strode before them. Each of the two young women giggled.

The two women were no longer quite so taken with the handsome young man as they had before been. His way was their way, however, so the two young women continued walking down the street behind him. They were no longer thinking of the handsome young man. The two young women were thinking and talking of other things. They were completely unaware that they were walking in the wake of the Living Vampire.

The hearty appetite of the Living Vampire would on occasion lead him to move from one restaurant to another to another, during the course of a single day. On such a day the young man might eat as many as six or eight meals. After each meal the handsome young man would leave a large tip for the waitress who had served him. As the waitress came to the table to refill for the last time the Living Vampire's water glass, the young man would smile largely at her, revealing his extended bicuspid. Some women were repulsed by the long teeth while other women—for some always unexplained reason—were attracted to the long teeth of the handsome young man. When the handsome man could tell that the women were attracted by his long teeth he would speak to them, and if the women happened to respond to his speaking in a friendly manner he would remember the women he spoke to: what they looked like, where they worked, their names. A day might come when such friendly women could prove useful to the Living Vampire.

The earthy smell we tend—in our folk tales and nightmares—to associate with our storied vampires is not there in the air surrounding the handsome young man. The vampires we tell about, the vampires whose images in our dreams awaken us sometimes, smell like the earth because they spend their days, sleeping, in coffins lined along the bottom with dried and dead nonfertile soil. The handsome young man carried no smell of earth because he slept nights in a bed, not days in a coffin, because he was the Living Vampire, not the vampire of our folk tales and nightmares.

The Living Vampire occasionally failed to satisfy his appetite; he could not be sated. On such occasions the handsome young man would leave in bed behind him the woman, or women, he had spent the evening with in order to search for, to seek out the women whom in some moment past had indicated that they found his large bicuspid attractive, who had responded positively to the handsome man's spoken compliments. These waiting women invariably

remembered the handsome young man with the long teeth and almost as invariably were more than ready to join him for a drink, after their working shift was ended. As he heard their assent, the handsome young man would sit back in his seat and smile, revealing once again to the waiting woman before him the extended bicuspid of the Living Vampire.

The internal evidence—supporting, perhaps, a hypothesis that something might be wrong, something missing—to be found in women recently visited by the Living Vampire is close to nil, though there is a slight reduction in hemoglobin density, a slight lowering in blood pressure. Both symptoms are easily explainable, however, through alternate hypotheses. The external evidence to be found is that we are acquainted with through our folk tales and nightmares: a certain drowsiness, a listlessness, a sense of minor disorientation, a becoming pallor made all the more visible by a slight flush to the cheeks, a slight smile around the lips struggling to burst into a full existence. There is though one traditional external symptom lacking: there is no pair of pinpoint holes to be found in the necks of women visited recently by the Living Vampire.

The very women—this is not always but is often so—who most desire the Living Vampire are those women most capable of resisting the handsome young man's tender and affable, smooth and capable advances. Their being capable of refusing, however, is not to say that they do refuse, it is simply to say that they are capable of so doing. The women who most desire the Living Vampire are also those most likely to see some morning a reflection of rosy-cheeked pallor, to feel some morning a sweet tiredness, to wake some morning and wonder where the handsome young man of the night before has gone.

The instinct to seek out, to search for the young women who are attracted to, who are able to admire in some way, his extended bicuspid is an instinct which helps to preserve the well-being of the handsome young man. But the Living Vampire's seeking is not a seeking of the questing sort. The Living Vampire searches for, seeks out young women in order that the young women might see, and come to follow after, the Living Vampire. The handsome young man does not go to them, to the young women; the young women come to him, to the Living Vampire.

The news that some particular young woman had come under the sway of the Living Vampire would rather quickly find its way through the circles or squares, through the network of the young woman's acquaintance. On more than one occasion a second—or a third, a fourth, a fifth—young woman would know to whom the first young woman had been referring as she told—to the friend or acquaintance who would then set the chain of story in motion—her tale of the previous night's occurrence. At the next meeting between that second young woman—or the third, the fourth, the fifth—and the first young woman—whose experience had begun the chain of story, had been responsible for triggering an occasional recollection—the second woman might casually inquire—knowing full well that it had been he—whether the man in question might have been a handsome young man with long teeth. The two young women would giggle at the idea of their doubling, their repetition, neither knowing that they both had come—for a night if not longer—under the sway of the Living Vampire.

The greatest thrill many young women experienced in their intercourse with the Living Vampire came not in the act of doubling itself, but came the next morning when the young woman would awaken and, looking into her mirror, would see in her reflection a death-like pallor, made more visible than it might have been by the slight though rosy flush there in her cheeks. The young woman would recall not the doubling of the night before, not the repetition of that doubling, but would recall the softness she had felt inside herself at the idea of being with the handsome young man with long teeth. The flow of her blood inside her had felt different somehow.

The vital statistics of the Living Vampire are as follows:

Height: Six feet even.
 Weight: One hundred seventy-five pounds.
 Color of hair: Deep black.
 Color of eyes: Piercing blue.
 Length of lips: Two and one-half inches.
 Width of lips: Three-eighths inch.
 Length of nose: Two and one-quarter inches.
 Width of nose: One and three-eighths inches.
 Length of face: Nine and one-half inches.
 Width of face: Six and one-quarter inches.
 Span of forehead (in middle): Two and one-half inches.

Span of forehead (to right or left): Three and one-half inches.

Chest measurement: Forty inches.

Waist measurement: Thirty inches.

Hip measurement: Thirty-four inches.

Circumference of wrists: Seven and one-half inches.

Circumference of neck: Fifteen inches.

Circumference of thighs: Eighteen inches.

Circumference of head: Twenty-four inches.

Size of shoe: Ten and one-half, AA.

Favorite colors: Muted, unprepossessing blues and browns.

Preferred manner of dress: Casual but studied.

Preferred type of woman: Blond, brunette, long-legged, tall, thin, unintelligent, young.

Preferred manner of manipulation: Indirection.

Q: What does the Living Vampire feel, with regard to the young women he seduces?

A: He feels, from the very beginning, antagonism toward the women he seduces.

Q: How might the antagonism felt by the Living Vampire, toward the women he seduces, be characterized?

A: It is an antagonism of grand proportion.

Q: Does this antagonism, felt by the Living Vampire toward the young women he seduces, manifest itself in any overt way, in the behavior he exhibits toward them?

A: No. Not really. He seduces them, and soon he leaves them. The antagonism he feels is never overtly manifested. Not really.

Q: How do the seduced young women feel, toward the Living Vampire?

A: Women are quite taken with the Living Vampire. He makes them feel, inside themselves, something new. Yes, the young women he seduces are quite taken, initially, by the Living Vampire.

Q: Initially? Does something happen?

A: After a certain amount of time has gone by, the young women come to see, not that they have been misled, but that they have misled themselves, with regard to their relationship to the Living Vampire.

- Q: What do the seduced young women come eventually to see?
- A: At last they come to see that they do not mean to the Living Vampire what he has come to mean to them.
- Q: What do the young women feel, inside themselves, at the moment of such a recognition?
- A: They feel antagonism, an antagonism directed not toward themselves, directed instead toward the Living Vampire.
- Q: Does this antagonism, which has come to be felt toward the Living Vampire by the young women he has seduced, manifest itself in any overt way, in their subsequent behavior toward him?
- A: It does not. Not really. Because by then, by the time that moment of recognition is reached by the seduced young women, the Living Vampire is no longer there. Not really there. He has long before gone.
- Q: How might this antagonism, which the seduced young women come finally to feel toward the Living Vampire, be characterized?
- Q: It is an antagonism of grand proportion.

The many young women seduced by the Living Vampire tend to be of a similar type, to come under—in some sense—a single category of classification. The Living Vampire's relationships with the many young women he seduces tend to follow a similar pattern of progression. The Living Vampire is aware of that similarity, is aware of that pattern. The Living Vampire means things to be that way.

The personal life of the Living Vampire is carefully kept hidden from the many young women he seduces. These young women are never, however, aware of any *keeping hidden*, on the part of the handsome young man. Should they become so aware they would be forced to admit, to themselves, that they therefore must be classified as being an aspect of the Living Vampire's impersonal life only. The many young women seduced by the handsome young man with long teeth are not of a type capable of admitting such a thing to themselves. Even as time passes, as the many young women—in spite of themselves, as it were—come to see that the handsome young man is something different from what they had assumed him to be, the many young women are incapable of admitting to being an aspect of the handsome young man's impersonal

life merely. The many young women come mainly to feel—in a vague and inarticulate way—that they have been somehow manipulated by the handsome young man with long teeth. The many young women become antagonistic toward the young man they still do not, still cannot know is the Living Vampire. But by then, at such a point in time, what recourse is left them? There is no recourse. And the saddest aspect of all is that the many young women seduced by the handsome young man have learned nothing—absolutely nothing—from the man they do not, will not ever, know is the Living Vampire.

The instinct to preserve his personal life from the view of the many young women he seduces is an instinct in the Living Vampire analogous to what is commonly referred to as the *instinct toward preservation of the species*, when the species referred to is a species other than Man, other than *homo sapiens*. This particular instinct—to protect his personal life—its being successfully preserved, is so necessary to the well-being of the handsome young man that such an analogy is warranted.

The relaxed atmosphere created by the Living Vampire as he seduces the many young women who have found his long teeth attractive is a pleasing atmosphere. The young women are pleased, as the handsome young man is pleasing. Music swirls through the air which surrounds them. The smell of garlic bubbles from the sauce heating on the young woman's stove. Soon the two of them shall eat. Already the young woman is feeling, inside her, in the movement of her blood, somehow different. The young woman's heart—she thinks—does not beat; the movement inside her is smoother than beating. The young blond woman is relaxed, she is pleased. The blond young woman smiles at the handsome young man, thinks of his long teeth, giggles. In the mirror, when he takes her over before it, as he stands before the mirror with his arm around this young blond woman, she does not see his reflection, she sees only her own. The young woman stares at her own reflected eyes only, and thinks to herself that she feels, inside herself, somehow different; while he, the Living Vampire, too fails to notice his own reflection, looks at the reflection of the blond young woman only, and sees before it is even there the death-like pallor which will inhabit her face in the morning, sees the death-like pallor that will in the morning be highlighted by the slight though rosy complexion which will be there in the young woman's cheeks.

The atmosphere of seduction created by the handsome young man is such a relaxed one that many young women fall into a sleep so sound as to enable the Living Vampire to arise from the bed where he lay beside them, to dress, to enter once more into the living world outside, to enter once more into the night, into the night's streets.

The earthy smell of the two women—one blond, one brunette—who had stood to either side of him as he waited for the light to change, was what first attracted the attention of the Living Vampire. The smell of earth tickled—was it an atavistic tickle?—the handsome young man's nose, somewhere very deep inside, and made him yawn. The young man knew that the two young women had seen, and he sensed that the two young women were attracted to, his extended bicuspid. The Living Vampire sensed that the two young women—one blond, one brunette—would giggle at his long teeth, behind his back, as they continued to follow him down the street. The Living Vampire used the windshields of cars parked along the street, used the slanted glass of storefront doorways, used the faces of certain people walking toward him, as types of mirrors in which to watch the various and varying reflections of the two young women still walking in his wake, one blond, one brunette. Had he sensed rightly? Had the two women been attracted to his, the Living Vampire's, long teeth? Had their giggle relieved them of their initial attraction? Were they following him? Or was his way simply their way? The handsome young man walked before, the two attractive young women walked after. The Living Vampire refused to act in any way. The Living Vampire provided, however, the two young women an opportunity to come to him, by turning into a coffee shop. The Living Vampire smiled at the waitress who served him; the waitress admired the long teeth of the handsome young man. At a table in a corner of the coffee shop sat the two young women, one blond, one brunette. Because the waitress so obviously admired the handsome young man, the two women began once more to be quite taken with him. The two young women giggled, once more. The Living Vampire smiled, his white bicuspid gleamed. Things had now come far enough: the two young women would take the Living Vampire home with them that night; all three of them knew, sensed, this. The two young women did indeed take home that night the handsome young man with long teeth, and at evening's end the two women—one blond, one brunette—lay both in deep sleep upon the double bed, with a

death-like pallor in their body's skin, while the slight though rosy flush in their cheeks was quite overshadowed by the reflected red of the satin sheets on which the two women—one blond, one brunette—lay. The Living Vampire stood in the room's doorway looking—casually yet studiously—at the two young women as they lay upon the double bed. The Living Vampire, his earthy appetite not quite satisfied, was preparing to enter once more into the night, into the living world, was preparing to walk once again down the night's streets. In the morning the two young women would rise, each feeling a sweet tiredness, and both would notice in their pale reflections the image for a softness they each would feel inside themselves, a feeling which was somehow different. The two young women would think not of the doubling of the night before, not of the repetition of that doubling, but would—both of them—think of the softness they felt inside, of a tired sweetness, would think about the deathlike pallor—a pallor highlighted by the slight though rosy complexion of their cheeks—which they saw in their double reflection, in the morning's mirror. The two young women, one blond, one brunette, each of them and both together, having been seduced by the Living Vampire, would only then wonder where he had gone, the handsome young man of long tooth, the man they would never, could not ever, know was the Living Vampire.