

Albert's Back-Story

By Irish P.

In the darkness the young man tiptoed from bush to bush until he reached the servants' entrance to the mansion. The curly haired blonde held his breath as he turned the door handle. Click! The door then gave a quiet groan on its hinges as it opened. Albert had had doubts if the footman would keep his word after taking the coin. "Straight down the corridor to the staircase, on the second floor, the third door to the left." Is what he had been told. The corridor was dark and narrow. He doubted two people could pass shoulder to shoulder. The staircase was even more claustrophobic and at an extremely steep angle. At the 2nd floor landing, he was glad for the railing around the stairwell, even if it did feel as if it would collapse at any moment. As he made his way down the servant's dark, hidden corridors, he noticed that not all of the doors were doors. One was a doorway with a tapestry covering it. Another was a false window with a heavy velvet drapery covering it. He stepped up to the appointed door, which was a pocket door that opened by a small finger hole that he peered through.

Inside he saw a four poster bed with sheer curtains pulled closed around it and the shadow of two women cast upon them from a pair of candles above the headboard mounted to the wall. One woman was gently combing the other's hair as they spoke in quiet, inaudible, whispers.

Albert took a deep breath and straightened out his back. Then he heard footsteps coming from the stairway. He couldn't be caught here. Thinking quickly he went through the false window and kept himself concealed within the voluminous velvet draperies until the footsteps passed. Then he heard voices in the room he had taken refuge in.

"But that's where I disagree with you Victor. How could these monsters be anything else than creations of Satan himself? To think that a person would willingly create creatures such as these willingly with the knowledge of their bloodthirsty nature is beyond fathoming."

"That is why I don't think it was a human that creation of them and Satan is just a creation of the church to keep us coming to mass 3 days a week. But really this is something we should discuss in a meeting rather than in my home."

"You're right. Besides it's getting late, much later than I expected it to be. I'll see you Thursday at the private room of the White Stag then?"

"Of course."

Albert's curiosity was now piqued, but there were more pressing interests filling his mind as he heard the soft footsteps of a woman going down the stairs. The young

man carefully made his way to the 3rd door on the left and peered inside through the finger hole. He could see the silhouette of the woman lying down and then reaching up to blow out the candles. When she laid back down her mouth was quickly covered with his in a deep kiss.

“Albert!” She whispered. “What are you doing here? I don’t think my dad was kidding when he said he’d kill you if he found us together again, and this time in my bedroom!”

“Shh. You worry too much. It just makes seeing each other more interesting.” He traced around the lace of her square necked nightgown. “Your dad still sees you as his 5 year old porcelain doll. He just can’t stand the idea of someone looking at you as the beautiful, sensual woman you’ve become.”

The young woman sighed as he kissed her neck. “Oh Albert...oh...Oh!” She moaned as a seasoned lover would.

A few hours before dawn Albert found his clothes and quietly left the same way he came.



In the morning Victoria and Albert rode together in their family’s buggy.

“Where were you last night?”

“I dreamt I was in paradise.”

Victoria raised an eyebrow, “I would not call Leslie Elmhurst’s bed paradise.”

Albert jumped. “How-I mean, what are you talking about?”

“Bert, you always want what you cannot have. She told everyone how her father threatened you after catching you kissing her in the stables.” She sighed. “And I saw you paying the footman. Are you sure it’s worth risking your neck just to get a little pleasure?”

Albert smiled. “Oh yeah. You’ll understand when you get married to some stuffy aristocrat.”

The blonde girl punched her older brother in the arm. “You’re so mean. You be careful today around Headmaster Elmhurst.”

“I’ll be fine. Go to class, show all those other girls how stupid they are.”

Victoria pushed her golden curls out of her face and gave her brother a kiss on the cheek as they pulled up in front of the girl’s academy and one of the footmen came out, helped her down and escorted her into the building. He watched until she entered the gates, and then pulled off towards his own school.

On arrival he hopped down and handed the reins off to some nameless stable hand as he walked into the ancient building, his highly polished expensive leather shoes sharply cracking as he walked on the marble floor at the entrance. Inside the front door he took off his hat and gloves, handed them to his right and seemly as if out of nowhere an usher appeared and took them and waited for his overcoat with a silk padded hanger. The entire time Albert’s eyes never once left the end of the hallway where his class met. He always arrived early when he dropped his sister off. Today he was early enough to have a sip of brandy with Professor Jensen before the other students arrived.

As he walked, about ½ way down the hall another usher came up to him with a note on a silver platter. It was a summons from Headmaster Elmhurst. Albert put the note in his pocket and shoed the boy away. Obviously he knew he was here, and if he avoided the man now, he would just make a spectacle of him later. The young man sighed and turned down the hallway to the Headmaster's office.

He walked up to the door; sitting at the desk just outside was his secretary, a young man with hunching shoulders. Albert stood at the door for a few seconds before loudly clearing his throat. The secretary apologized as he jumped up from his desk where he had been frantically scribbling and opened the door announcing him.

"Headmaster Elmhurst, Mr. Albert Westin here to see you." Albert stepped in, onto the soft Turkish wool rug and the secretary closed the door behind him.

To the left was a wall of bookcases with a large ornate mahogany desk covered in books and papers and a new automatic gas lantern. To the right was a pair of soft wingback chairs embroidered with the school's coat of Arms, and a small, but well stocked bar with etched glass doors in a mahogany case that matched the desk. Directly across from the door was the headmaster standing with his back to Albert, one hand in his pocket, the right holding a crystal beveled glass of what looked and smelled like bourbon as it sat on the mantle of an antique, beautifully carved marble mantle that surrounded the fireplace. A clock, a vase of fresh flowers, and a small portrait of the headmaster's family adorned it. Above was a gold framed mirror that hung slightly tilted away from the wall that Albert could see himself standing there in full, plus the Headmaster's sour expression as he took another sip of his drink.

"You wanted to see me sir?" Albert asked breaking the silence like a stone through a church window.

"I sent for you, yes." He took a deep breath, never turning away from the softly glowing fireplace. "This morning as I got ready for work I spotted someone leaving the manor, across the grounds of my estate. When questioned, my household identified you as having spent most of the night with my daughter. I wish to know your intentions."

"My intentions sir?" Albert swallowed hard.

"Yes." He still kept his back to the young man. "You plucked the flower of my daughter's innocence, I wish to know what you intend to do about it." The hand in his pocket was now a fist as he looked into the mirror for the reflection of the younger man's reaction.

"I have no intentions for your daughter, as for the flower of her innocence, when I arrived; she had long since been plucked."

A split second before, Albert realized what was happening, but his honor, and knowing he was part of the cause of the headmaster's shame, he refused to react. The older man turned quickly and swung at the young blonde man. The punch connected, and with more force than either had expected. It almost seemed to go in slow motion as Albert saw the anger swell in the man and as his fist flew through the air and connected with the left side of his face. The next thing he knew he was on the floor, his head was spinning and Elmhurst was walking back over to the fireplace. He took another swig of the amber liquid and turned back around toward the youth as he was getting to his feet.

"Mr. Westin, you will be making an honest woman of my daughter."

"I beg your pardon sir, but why would I purchase damaged goods as it were?"

"But you were the one-"

“As I said before, I was not the one who deflowered your daughter, though I do admit to partaking of that sweet fragrance. Still I have no intentions of marrying her.”

The older man sighed and finished his drink. “There’s only one thing to be done.”

“I don’t think so.” Albert said as he rubbed his cheek, knowing full well that he was about to be challenged to a duel. And without knowing how to properly use a pistol he would surly loose.

“Excuse me?” Elmhurst stepped up to the boy and grabbed him by the collar. “You’re going to deny me justice?”

“Victor, what would Rev. Hamilton think about your opinions on Satan, and where the horrors come from?”

He slapped his hand over the boy’s mouth. “Where did you hear that?”

Albert slipped away from Victor. “A little birdie told me.”

“You eavesdropped on my conversation last night.”

The blonde let a smirk slip. “I’ll forget that conversation, and everything that happened last night if...you get me into your Thursday night meetings.”

“On one condition, you don’t lay another finger, even a smile at my daughter ever again.”

“I will exalt her virtue from the rooftops if you want.”

“That won’t be necessary. But if what you say is true, do you know who had beaten you to Leslie’s virtue?”

Albert thought for a moment. “Both Greg and Carl said-“ He stopped short when he saw the pained look on the Headmaster’s face.

“Don’t say any more please. I’m sorry I asked. I’ll meet you at the White Stag at 7pm on Thursday. Bring a hooded white robe that covers your face.” The headmaster seemed to have more gray in his short wavy brown hair now as he turned back to the fireplace with slumped shoulders and turned down the portrait of his family.

Albert took the hint and left the room to go to class.



Victoria found her brother lounging in his shirtsleeves and vest with a leg slung over the arm of the velvet wingback chair, reading a thick, handwritten, leather-bound book by the light of a silver candelabra that sat on the small table next to the chair. Albert barely even noticed her.

When he realized someone was in the room he didn’t even look up.

“I specifically said I wanted to be left alone. Since you’re here you can bring me some more candles and have my lunch brought here.”

Victoria walked over to the heavy draperies covering the library windows and threw them open. “What is up with you?”

Albert jumped up, slamming the book shut and hiding it behind his back, knocking the candles over, wax spilling over the side table and onto the rug on the floor. Luckily the candles went out before they hit the dusty rug. “Tori, what are you doing here?”

“It’s my home too. I’m worried about you Bert.” She said as she picked up the candles. “You were chasing Leslie Elmhurst like a dog after a bitch in heat, and then suddenly you’re ignoring her. You didn’t say a word when she was practically forced

to marry that beer baron that was nearly 4 times her age. You've missed half of your wrestling and rugby practices, instead staying at home reading strange books in the dark during the middle of the day."

"You're right." Albert nodded solemnly. "I should quit trying to read and further my knowledge and education, and go back to my childish ways of playing games and chasing girls."

"Bert, you know that's not what I'm saying."

"Then what *do* you mean?"

"I'm worried about you. What are you getting into? You changed so suddenly. You're not, um, you're not dabbling in the dark arts are you?" she had lowered her voice to a whisper.

"Tori, really. Are we 6 year olds, back in catechism? I know better than to try to use black magic."

"Then why the sudden interest in reading?"

"It's not for you to know."

"Albert Lancaster Westin!"

"Fine!" He pulled another book from behind his back. "Here, but I warned you." He handed her the book entitled *Kama Sutra*.

"Albert!" She dropped the book after only seeing 1 page, and ran out of the room.

The young man chuckled to himself on his ruse and after flipping through a few pages of the dropped book, hid it back in a pocket in his vest. He then took out the older tome and continued reading about various accounts of methods to conquer the horrors and theories on where they may be from.



Albert spoke in soft whispers at the weekly meeting at the White Stag when his small group was approached by another pair of members to help perform a ritual. It was supposed to identify and find the owner of a strange ring. Albert and one of his associates agreed. The anonymity the hooded robes provided was both a boon and a burden. If the men could identify him, he would never have agreed to it. As it was, there were a lot of rosaries that would need to be said to cleanse his soul and conscience.

Something was familiar about the associate that went with him to the private room for the ritual. He couldn't put his finger on it, but he could swear that he knew the other young man from somewhere. They entered the room that had already been set up by a member all in white, with the bed pushed to one side and a five pointed star within a circle drawn on the wooden floor in chalk. His associate gasped at the sight but Albert reassured him.

"Pentacles have been used as a symbol of protection throughout ancient history." Albert put a hand on his shoulder and gave a reassuring squeeze.

This seemed to have eased the young man but he didn't say anything. There were now 5 of them, and the member who had stayed in the room arranged them each to stand at a point of the star. He explained that they were looking for the owner of this strange ring which he placed in the middle of the diagram. He then began the ritual by having everyone hold hands. At first Albert didn't notice, but after the leader

began speaking, he noticed that his associate that had come up with him from the larger meeting room, and was standing next to him, had really soft hands. Feminine hands. He had heard that women could get into the club because everything is so anonymous and the robes and hoods hide everything. This really made him wonder if he really did know this woman. Then he snapped back into reality and listened to the ritual. The leader was now speaking in Latin. It made him wish he had paid more attention in class. He could only pick up a few words here and there, but listening had about the same effect as his Latin teacher and the minister at mass did. Albert began getting drowsy. He tried his hardest to pay attention to the words but it became harder and harder for him to keep awake.

Albert blinked and opened his eyes. Now he was in a different room. He was in an abandoned manor. It was dark in the room, even though there was the setting sun coming through the naked window. There were sheets over the furniture and paintings, none of the windows had coverings, all the rugs were rolled up. Then he noticed the pair standing in the window. A tall thin man stood in the window with long thick curly black hair hanging down his back. He was silhouetted in the full length window he stood in front of, wearing a great coat. Most of his details were hidden from him. The woman standing with him had long flowing blonde curls. The tall man leaned down and inhaled her scent. In the glass Albert could see her reflection, and instantly realized that it was Victoria standing there. From the look on her face she couldn't move and was not here on her own volition. Albert reached out to her and yelled her name.

Suddenly he was standing back in the room at the inn with 3 other men in white robes. The associate he had come up with was now gone.

"Where is she?" Albert began frantically searching the room.

"What happened what did you see?" They began questioning him.

"My sister, he has my sister. How did he get her? Who is he?" Albert suddenly turned to the leader of the ritual. "Tell me what's going on. Now."

"He, he's a vampire we've been hunting. He keeps eluding us. We were hoping to find out where he's at from this ring we found with his last victim. Where did your friend go to?"

"I don't know who that was, I just realized it was a girl when you had us all hold hands." Realization hit that the girl was his sister. He had recognized her laugh earlier in the night and couldn't place it because he assumed she was a man. "Dear God. He got her through the ritual. Do it again, we need to do the ritual again and get her back."

"It doesn't work that way friend. I don't have enough of the chalk and the holy water to do this again. Besides we would need another artifact from him." He pointed to the ring which was now shattered on the floor.

Then he noticed, at the point where the woman had stood, there was a delicate silver cross necklace in a small pile. Albert immediately recognized it as Victoria's. He took off, shedding his robes as he ran.





hen he got home he burst into Maria's room, in the servants area of the house.

"Where is Victoria?" He didn't even notice their governess' niece Anna, their new scullery maid who was changing into her nightgown, who was sharing a room with her aunt.

"Mr. Westin!" She shooed him out of her room, wearing her night robe and slippers. "What is wrong?" She asked as she shut her door behind her as they stood in the hallway.

"I think she's been kidnapped. Where is she?"

"Dear God." Maria crossed herself. "I thought I had talked her out of following you tonight. The bar is no place for a woman."

Albert left her and went to Victoria's room. He found it empty. He slumped down in the chair in front of her vanity. He looked into the mirror and barely recognized the man he had become. He was pale and his eyes were sunken from not enough sleep.

"Victoria was right to worry about me. And now she's gone. It's all my fault. She followed me to keep me out of trouble. Damn it!" He pounded his fist on the table and broke down into tears. How would he explain to his father what happened? If he found out that she was gone because he had participated in a magic ritual, he would turn him into the church and probably be burned at the stake. Then both of them would be lost for good. The only way would be for Albert to go searching for her himself. He would find her, no matter what it took.

The young man packed his bags and got ready to go. He glanced at himself in his own mirror in his room, and he put down his bags and looked back at the man in the mirror. On his own vanity he picked up his razor and shaved the hair completely from his head. He was going to make a new start. He was going to help people other than just pleasure for himself. He was going to hunt for his sister, and he would not cut his hair until he had found her and brought her home again.



"A lbert," an ethereal yet eerie voice called out to the young gentleman. "you should leave."

"No! Not without Victoria!" He hunted through the large empty mansion with a pistol in one and, a sharpened wooden stake in the other.

Suddenly, as if out of a shadow, a tall thin man appeared before him. "You will leave now."

Albert resisted the overwhelming fear and lunged at the creature. He easily sidestepped the young man and slashed at him with talon like claws. They ripped through his cheek, blood blinding him. The creature grabbed Albert by the throat, taking a long sniff of the red liquid running down his face.

"You WILL leave now, and if we ever meet again, I WILL kill you."

Albert could no longer resist the terror that filled his heart, his mind, and even his nose. He screamed and ran through the front door, out of the front lawn and didn't stop until he was almost to town.

He still bears the scar of his failure on his face and in his heart where he still searches for his lost sister Victoria.