

# The Vampire Across the Hall-3. The Exchange

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## The Vampire Across the Hall- 3. The Exchange.

The heat rose from the footpath in shimmering waves, the air was heavy with steam, the trees still, their leaves drooping, beseeching the sky for water. It was hot. It was summer in Sydney, clear blue skies, cicadas humming, pure harsh light and black triangular shadows which provided little relief.

The Presidio building at Newtown stood tall in the sun. Its straight lines cast patches of black on the courtyard. Life continued. Madden, the vampire across the hall, pursued his nocturnal activities, Anna and Mark still had lots of children, the Glee club sang every month, and I, Daisi Malone, was still looking for a job. The good news was that the spirits in the lift had agreed to stop murmuring in exchange for English soccer scores.

To tell the truth, I was feeling bored and restless. Unemployment wasn't enjoyable and there were no real job prospects in my immediate future.

I was spending a lot of time at Anna and Mark's place and was comfortable there, Mark was at work all day, Anna was a soothing presence and the kids were fun. They also had air conditioning.

One morning I arrived at Anna's door at 10 am. 'Good Morning, Good Morning.' I sang as she opened the door.

'Daisi!' she seemed a bit disappointed when she saw me, but quickly recovered. 'Come in' She smiled.

I stepped into the apartment and immediately sighed with relief. 'It's so hot.' I said

'Indeed' said Anna, as she closed the door behind me.

Suddenly I was overrun by children. 'Daisi, Daisi,' they chanted, as they pulled at my hands and dug in my pockets. I like children; they're fun, especially if you can give them back.

Anna had three children, Eric, Matilda and Mason. Eric was a tall thin boy with jet black hair and deep brown eyes like his mother, Matilda was a blonde beauty and Mason, the youngest, was a thin little lad with soft plump hands. They liked me, I always brought presents, mainly stickers, and I had some hidden talents which amused them.

Anna clapped her hands, 'Children, children, let Daisi sit down.'

'Awwwww'

Anna grew stern, a touch of steel in her soft voice. 'Now.'

The kids took a couple of steps away and let me flop into the soft folds of the couch.

'Would you like a drink Daisi?'

'Sure Anna, water would be great.'

As Anna went to the kitchen, I stood up, turned towards the kids and majestically proclaimed.

'What has happened since the last time the Great Wizard Daisi was here?'

Eric gazed up at me with a gap toothed grin.

'I lost a tooth.' He lisped, 'look.'

'Oh my.' I excitedly proclaimed, 'Did the tooth fairy come?'

He looked puzzled, 'Tooth fairy?'

Anna returned and gave me the glass of water. 'Oh Daisi, we...um... we don't really...well we don't have the tooth fairy.'

I was very embarrassed. Anna and Mark had three kids and I wasn't sure how financially secure they were. Maybe they couldn't afford the tooth fairy? Or perhaps I had insulted Anna's culture? I gazed around the room at the Ganesha statue on the windowsill and felt my cheeks redden.

'Oh' I gulped the glass of water. 'Well Eric, you really don't want to meet the tooth fairy. She's a nasty creature with a snotty nose and sharp teeth that will bite you like a mosquito and drink all your blood.'

‘Ewwwww’. All the children chorused and Anna laughed.

I spent the day with Anna and the kids, they were particularly impressed with my juggling and we had to clear the living room when they decided to try it themselves. After a day of laughter and silliness I reached my door after 8.30pm, having declined Anna’s offer of a late dinner.

Of course, as I arrived outside my apartment I saw Madden, we nodded.

‘It’s hot.’ I said

He nodded again, turned his back and walked towards the lift.

As I ate dinner I wondered how I had offended the vampire. I knew I had acted really stupidly at the séance, but still...I just couldn’t figure him out.

The day closed and the traditional Sydney southerly breeze blew through the house. The windows rattled as the temperature dropped and I got ready for bed.

It was just past midnight, sleep was creeping at the edges of my eyes and my thoughts were meandering idly. Through the window, I heard the trees rustling, echoes of footsteps and a childish voice saying the words, ‘tooth fairy’. There was an answering ‘shhhhh’, the sound of leaves, and thumping echoes, fast and slow, beating below my window like two heart beats, as I fell asleep.

Chapter Two.

The next day I returned to Anna’s place. I knocked on the door and received the usual greeting from the kids, except, this time something was different. A short black haired girl, I had never met was there, and there was no sign of Eric.

‘Where’s Eric?’ I asked amidst the hubbub. I looked over the bobbing childish heads and tried to find my dark haired friend.

I turned to Anna with a confused look, ‘Where’s Eric? I wanted to tell him about a dream I had.’

‘Oh’ she gave me one of her soothing smiles. ‘He’s at his grandparent’s house.’

‘Oh’ I looked at the other three kids, and tried to remember seeing the little dark haired girl before. I looked at Anna again, and encountered her breathtaking smile and deep brown eyes. A peculiar relaxation overcame me. ‘Oh, OK.’

Anna asked me to take care of the kids whilst she ran some errands. I agreed. As soon as she left I felt more alert and that curious relaxation disappeared.

The children and I played games and I juggled for them. Then we opened a jigsaw and tried to put it together. As we played with the pieces, I turned to little Matilda.

‘What happened to Eric, Matilda?’

‘He went away to the dark’ she answered.

I was confused. As I pondered her answer, the front door opened and Mark came down the hall.

‘Oh Daisy, Hi’ he said and gave me a big hug that almost broke my ribs.

‘How are you?’

‘I’m..I’m good. Ummm shouldn’t you be at work or something?’ I stuttered.

‘I gotta half day.’ He swept Matilda up in his arms and whirled her around. She squealed in delight.

‘I can handle these ruffians Daisi, why don’t you go out and enjoy the day?’

‘Ummm.. OK.’ I tried to say good bye to the kids, but they were too wrapped up in Mark who was making faces and playing monsters with them.

### Chapter 3

I was still puzzling over the strangeness of it all when I went to sleep that night. Sometime around midnight, I was woken by a loud noise, the piercing sound of a child crying.

‘Daddy, Daddy, I don’ wanna go.’

I heard firm footsteps and a deep masculine voice saying ‘shhhhh’. I knew it wasn’t the trees. I looked through the open window and there, in a pool of light below, was Mark with a wriggling and crying Matilda in his arms

I panicked. What was going on? Matilda’s sobs echoed through the courtyard. It was disturbing and eerie. I wanted to know what was happening, and I wanted to help the poor little girl who was obviously in trouble

I raced down the fire escape to the courtyard and turned the corner just in time to see a blur of blonde hair and hear the last whisper of a softly crying child. I followed the sound and saw Mark put Matilda on the ground and hold her hand. I stopped and hid behind a convenient tree, making sure to keep them in sight.

The man and child continued walking down the dark, dimly lit, street. They passed the video store and its red lights glowed in their hair. Mark quickly dragged Matilda away when she tried to peek inside the still open adult bookstore. They stopped at the traffic lights, I hid in the doorway of the adult store, and took a quick peek into the interior, as they crossed the road. I quickly and silently tripped along behind them, taking care to keep to the shadows, and stay a discreet distance away.

They turned into the narrow, graffiti lined Eliza Street. It was very dark .I followed and tried to keep my footsteps in time with theirs so the echo didn’t alert Mark to my presence. But I think he heard me, he started to walk faster, and his footsteps sounded more quickly in the cavernous laneway as he rushed towards Camperdown Park

Just as I drew close to the back fence of the Courthouse Hotel near the park, there was a harsh guttural grunt behind me. I turned and felt a sharp stabbing pain in my shoulder. I stumbled backwards, screamed and something struck me, my nose spurted blood and I fell heavily onto the hard street.

I saw boots towering above, a foot raised just above my eye line, everything was moving slowly in a red tinged haze. The boot came closer, I struggled to move, but was too dazed and stunned I could feel the hard dirty cement at my back, the grazes on my legs where I had fallen, and as the boot drew closer to the side of my head I closed my eyes

There was a scream, a scuffle, and a soft female voice,

‘Can I have a little sip?’

A deep male voice answered sharply, ‘No.’

Strong masculine hands wrapped themselves around me, my body was lifted, for a brief moment I opened my eyes and saw a slight shimmering red smudge, then there was darkness.

#### Chapter 4

I was lying on a couch, my couch, something cold was on my nose and a tall dark shadow was kneeling at my side.

‘Daisi, Daisi.’ It was Madden

‘What happened?’ I tried to get up, but immediately fell back again.

‘Take it easy Daisi.’ He put a cold white hand on my bare arm. ‘You’ve been attacked.’

‘Attacked?’ suddenly images of a black boot swirled in my mind and nausea rose to my throat.

‘I’m going to be...I’m going to be...’ I retched.

Madden deftly placed a bucket under my chin.

I threw up violently, all the memories of the attack rushed through my mind, my head exploded, and my body ached.

Madden gently laid me back on the couch.

‘Mmmm I think maybe I should take you to hospital, as a precaution.’

‘No, NO...I won’t.’ I sat up again, looked him straight in the eye, ‘you can’t make me go to hospital, I hate hospital...I’d rather die.’

‘You almost did.’ He said bluntly.

I stuttered to a stop, then said softly, ‘please Madden, I don’t want to go to hospital.’

He sighed, ‘OK, but I want to stay with you overnight, to make sure you haven’t got a concussion.’

I looked at him, too weak, too battered to argue, but I managed to feebly protest. ‘What are you? Some sort of nurse, vampire thing?’

‘Well...actually...’ he grinned.

I was too tired to debate it, I just stared.

‘Let’s get you to bed.’ He said. Madden easily carried me to my bedroom, he laid me gently on the bed and fluffed the pillows

‘Comfortable?’

I groaned.

‘I’ll be on the couch- don’t worry if you hear noises, I’ll just come and check on you during the night. OK?’

I sighed; I really just ached all over.

The night passed and I tossed and turned. The bruises on my body were like rocks beneath me, I dozed off and on. Every so often I felt a hand on my forehead, at my wrist. When morning came, I felt drained, sore, but fairly clear headed. I even got to my feet and stumbled into the living room.

Madden looked up from the playstation game he was playing. 'How are you feeling?'

I groaned but managed an 'ok'.

'Here, sit down, do you want anything? Let me get you a glass of water.'

I sat and he brought me the drink. Sinking into the couch felt good, Madden looked into my eyes and checked my nose.

'Ouch'. I said as he touched it.

'Mmmm there's swelling, but it's not broken, you're lucky.' He looked me square in the eyes and grew serious. 'Now do you want to tell me what you were doing in the back lanes of Newtown after midnight?'

I think if I was feeling normal, I would not have told him, but I was feeling pretty awful, battered, beaten, sore and confused, so I told him. I told him about Eric disappearing, and Mark and Matilda.

Madden just shook his head. 'So what? You think Anna and Mark are what? Killing children?'

'I don't know what they're doing, but something's wrong.'

'So you almost got yourself killed because you 'think' something, that by the way is none of your business, is 'wrong'.' He put sarcastic emphasis on the 'think' and 'wrong'.

I perked up at that. 'Do you know what's going on?'

'No' he snapped back, 'and its none of my business what they're doing.'

'but...'

'No. I'm not getting involved in any more of your schemes Daisy. Backpackers, séances, this was a nice quiet building before you came along, I've had enough.'

I pouted, I really did. I felt like pouting. I'd been beaten up, almost killed and Madden was acting like my father. Then my slow moving brain thought of something else. 'If you've had enough, why were you following me last night?'

'I wasn't following you; I was at the Courthouse Hotel, in the garden with a friend, when I heard you scream.'

My aches and pains were temporarily forgotten. 'Oooohhhh, a friend? Who was she?'

'Never mind' he snapped back.

And then another thought crossed my sluggish mind. 'That woman, that woman in the red'

Madden stared at me angrily, 'I said forget it.' He snorted, 'Don't give me that look Daisy.'

He got up and walked towards the door in a huff, then as he got there, stopped and sighed,

‘Look, are you going to be OK?’

‘Yeah’ I grinned mischievously, ‘I’ll be fine. You go and see your girlfriend.’

‘Daisi.’ He swallowed his anger ‘if you need anything, let me know.’

I grinned, ‘Oh I just want to meet the pretty girl.’

Madden grunted and walked out the door.

## Chapter Five.

I spent the next couple of days recuperating. My nose quickly went back to its usual size and all I had left were some minor scrapes on my legs and arms from where I had fallen, but overall I was pretty lucky that Madden had come by when he did.

I spent most of those days sleeping, but my mind was still racing with thoughts of Mark and the disappearing children and Madden and his girlfriend. So on the third day, I decided to do something about it. I resolved to stay awake all night and follow Mark again. But this time, I wanted to take Madden with me.

The first night, I stayed awake glued to the window, but nothing happened. The only sounds were the Glee Club and the cackling of the new neighbours.

The second night was much the same, hot, humid and no Mark, just cackling

The third night was a different story. It was around midnight, and the air was hot and sticky, I was hanging out my bedroom window trying desperately to get some cool air when I heard footsteps below. I sneakily withdrew my head from sight and listened carefully, I heard a child cry and then a male voice, which I identified as Mark, saying quietly, ‘shhh, we’ll be there soon.’

I quickly raced to the front door, grabbing my keys on the way out. Then hopefully, I bashed on Madden’s door.

‘Hello, Madden. Are you there?’

There was no answer, and I bashed on his door again in frustration. ‘Madden!’ I screamed.

The door opened slightly and Madden poked his head out ‘Daisi?’ What the hell do you want? I’m busy.’

I stood on tiptoes to peek over his shoulder, ‘Busy with what?’

Then a blonde head appeared behind him. ‘Busy with me sweetie.’ She said.

She was breathtakingly beautiful, but I barely noticed, I was so excited about the prospect of following Mark. I grabbed Madden by the hand ‘C’mon, Mark’s stealing another kid, we’ve got to follow him.’

‘What?’

‘Oooh, child stealing?’ The blonde woman purred as she looked down upon me. ‘What do you propose little one?’

‘I propose following him’ I said. I continued to tug on Madden’s arm. ‘C’mon.’

Madden stumbled forward as I pulled. He looked behind him at the blonde woman.

‘I think it sounds like an interesting excursion’ she said in a sibilant whisper, ‘We should aid your neighbour in her hour of need’

‘See’. I tugged at Madden’s arm again, ‘C’MON.’

The woman stepped up beside him and whispered, ‘Yes, Come On’

Madden looked from me to his blonde companion who raised her eyebrows at him and smiled sweetly. ‘It would be most amusing.’

Then he sighed, ‘Women!’

He disappeared inside the unit for a moment and the blonde woman, dressed in a brilliant red dress, extended a hand towards me. ‘My name is Eliza, you are Daisy?’

I took her hand, it was cold. ‘ummm... yeah.’ I was looking around frantically hoping to rush Madden ‘Yeah... we’re going to lose him if Madden doesn’t hurry up.’ I poked my head in the door, ‘Hurry up!’ I screamed.

‘Yeah, keep your shirt on.’ Madden appeared with his keys and the three of us turned towards the fire escape.

‘Let’s go.’

We walked quickly down the stairs, and I couldn’t see Mark anywhere. ‘This way.’ I pointed towards the street where he had gone last time.

‘C’mon.’ I ran ahead and Eliza and Madden followed quickly. As we reached the corner of the street, I saw Mark and the little boy Mason walking across the road

‘There’ I pointed towards them.’ There they are.’ Madden and Eliza exchanged a look and Eliza nodded. We tailed Mark and the child down Eliza Street, towards the Courthouse Hotel. This time we passed in safety.

Under the soft glow of the street lights we crossed into Camperdown Park. The trees loomed ominously around us and the quiet of the night seeped into my bones. The only sounds were the soft crying of the child and Mark’s footsteps on the grass. The sandstone wall on the right hand side reflected the dull lamps of the park and its stones formed eerie shapes in the shadows.

I kept to the shade of the bushes and Eliza and Madden mimicked my steps. Then Mark and the child stopped in the middle of five long, tall, eucalyptus trees whose grey trunks rose high to the dark sky like oddly shaped limbs. Their majesty and power swallowed the park’s artificial light.

I suddenly halted, Madden, who was sometimes clumsy, stepped onto my foot. ‘Ouch.’ I groaned. And it seemed to echo through the park.

Eliza laughed softly and put her finger to her lips. ‘Hush’ she whispered.



Mark and the child stood calmly in the middle of the group of five trees and a star seemed to fall towards them bathing them in brilliant silver.

But then, Madden made a growling sound and leapt onto the sandstone wall beside us. He growled again, and disappeared into the darkness, I looked at Eliza puzzled, but then she too, growled and leapt onto the wall and out of sight.

I was almost blinded by the bright silver light which enveloped Mark and the child, but then to my surprise, I saw a round white clothed figure holding a golf club in its hand walking directly towards the spot where they were standing.

The figure was chanting loudly, 'Begone foul spirits, begone unnatural forces which befoul our air.' It brandished the golf club like a sword and then suddenly, it grunted and fell as Eliza leapt upon it from behind.

The silver light quickly disappeared and my eyes were still hazy from its afterglow. I heard Mark's voice,

'What's going on?'

And then, another figure in white leapt towards him, but it was intercepted by Madden, who quickly knocked it to the ground.

'Madden?' Mark questioned, 'What's going on?'

My eyes were clearing now, and I walked towards Madden who had his foot firmly planted on the front of a prostrate body. Eliza then appeared dragging the other white clothed figure behind her.

'What's going on?'" Mark asked for a third time, then he saw me, 'Daisi?'

'Ummm, hi Mark. ' I stuttered. I looked around and saw no sign of a child.

Madden turned towards Mark, 'I'll explain later. But meanwhile,' Madden turned towards Eliza, 'let's see who we have here?'

Eliza dragged the body towards Madden and lifted it easily to its feet. The figure was unconscious with blood staining its white outfit and as she lifted it I gasped. 'That's ..That's Gavin Cloud.'

'Yeah' Madden said grimly, 'and this one', he kicked at the unconscious figure beneath his foot, 'This is the one who attacked you the other night.

'You can drop him Eliza,' Madden said, and Gavin Cloud's body dropped with a thump to the ground.

'What are you going to do with them?' I asked nobody in particular.

'Mmmm let's just leave them here.' Mark suggested with a look at Madden.

'Yeah, that sounds like a good idea.' Madden turned to Eliza who was kneeling next to the prostrate body of Gavin Cloud, 'ummm,..Eliza...honey...we're leaving.'

We are?'" She looked up at him wiping her lips, 'so quickly?'

'Fraid so'

She sighed, 'if you say so.'

Mark looked at us suspiciously. "I suppose there's a perfectly reasonable explanation for all this?"

I gulped and shuffled my feet guiltily as Madden replied, 'I'll let Daisy explain when we get home.'

## Chapter 6

We arrived at Mark's unit shortly after 1am. I was confused and as Anna opened the door for us, I became even more so, as a child, who looked a lot like Mason, was holding her hand.

Mark looked at his wife and smiled, 'So who's this?'

Anna smiled back, 'This is Mason, he arrived a few minutes ago.'

Mark sighed, 'Good, I was a bit worried. We'll take you home in the morning Mason, OK? Why don't you get some sleep?'

The child yawned and Anna took him away.

Mark waved the three of us into his home, and looked sternly at our bedraggled figures. Actually, Madden and I looked dirty and tired, but Eliza, she looked radiant, glowing with health and vitality and her red dress was unmarked, unruffled and unstained.

'So, what's going on here?' Asked Mark. 'Daisy?'

I looked at Madden and he shrugged, I looked at Eliza, but she was too busy examining the books on the shelves to notice me, then I looked at Mark and quickly looked in the other direction.

'umm..'

'You better tell him Daisy' Madden ordered.

So I did.

I explained my confusion about the children, the disappearance of Eric and Matilda and the strange sounds I had heard beneath my window. I also mentioned the bright light I had seen in the park. Mark looked astonished as I finished lamely, 'So I was just kinda wondering, what was going on you know?'

'You were kinda wondering what was going on? And you couldn't have asked me?'

'That would have been rude' I said

'And it's not rude to follow me down the street?'

'Well, it's ...' I sighed, knowing whatever I said would be wrong, so I decided on the blunt truth, 'It's more fun that way.'

Mark laughed, he looked at Madden, dirty and dusty and drawn and he looked at me with my face still slightly bruised and my clothes torn from hiding in the park and he laughed.

‘Ok, I’ll tell you what you want to know. Sit down.’

Madden and I sat quickly, but Eliza was still roaming around the room idly picking things up and inspecting them, until Madden grabbed her arm and forced her to sit.

Mark shuffled around the house riffling through some papers on a desk until he found his lap top; he switched it on and after a couple of minutes turned it towards us.

‘Look here.’

He showed us a website.

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**“For all evil is rarely intended evil.”**

‘So you’re some sort of psychologist then?’ I asked.

Mark smiled ‘Look closer’

I leaned towards the screen, but saw nothing different. Then Eliza giggled, ‘For all evil is rarely intended evil? Clever’

I looked at Madden and then he smiled in recognition. I was obviously missing something.

‘What’s going on?’

Mark smiled again, ‘For All Evil is Rarely Intended Evil- F A E R I E- Faerie’

‘Fairies? You’re a Fairy?’ I was astounded, ‘you have GOT to be joking. Where are your wings?’

‘Well, Anna and I aren’t. But the kids, some of the kids are...Let me explain.’

‘There have been stories for centuries about how Faeries will replace new born babies with one of their own, people thought they were legends. When the white man came to Australia, he brought the faeries with him and they continued their old tricks of replacing human babies with faeries.

A faerie child is usually hyperactive, badly behaved, destructive and mischievous and the parent knows instinctively that something is wrong. That’s where Anna and I come in. We take in the faerie children and negotiate a swap, the faerie child for the original child. Of course many of the children we see are just taking too much Ritalin and are not faeries at all.’

‘Oh, so that’s what all the light was about?’

‘That’s right. I was swapping Faerie Mason for human Mason. Tomorrow I will return the human son to his parents. We will tell them he is cured, but really, he’s just been exchanged.’

‘Ohhhh’ I was still confused, ‘but how ...I mean...how , I mean why you?’

‘Trade secret’ Mark said. ‘I’m like the faerie version of the secret service. Not everybody in the land of Fae agrees with what we’re doing. It’s complicated.

‘So you’re a spy?’

‘I think I’ve said all I can say Daisi.’

‘Wow you are a spy!’ I exclaimed.

‘Well I guess that explains everything’ said Madden, ‘we should be going.’

‘Hang on. What about Gavin Cloud and his friend?’ I asked

Madden looked at Mark meaningfully and shook his head. ‘Don’t worry about Gavin Cloud, Daisi. I think Mark and I can deal with him.’

‘What? But why was he there? And did he have a golf club?’

Mark looked at Madden ‘It was a five iron right?’

Madden nodded, ‘I think so’

Mark grunted, ‘Iron kills Faeries.’ Then he laughed and shook his head, ‘A golf club, honestly.’

## Chapter Six

Well I guess I had solved the mystery of the disappearing children, but something didn’t seem right to me. I went home that night with more questions than answers, and seriously, Faeries? Well...

Madden and Eliza left me at my door and said goodnight. It was 2am. I was tired yet excited. As I got ready for bed, I reached for my pills and shaking the bottle noticed it was empty. Then it struck me, I hadn’t had my medication for days and I was feeling very, very funny.

END

## About the Author

Daisi Malone lives in the Presidio Building in Newtown, Sydney Australia. She has two lovebirds, lots of books and a curious nature.

Daisi has a website- [www.daisimalone.net](http://www.daisimalone.net) and a facebook page- she needs all the friends she can get.

This is the third book in the Vampire Across the Hall Series. Book 1- *The Vampire Across the Hall* is available at the ibookstore and at Smashwords.com under the name Leann Richards.

Book 2, *The Vampire Across the Hall 2 The Murmuring Lift* is available under the name Daisi Malone at Smashwords and the ibookstore

Look out for book 4- The Glee Club, coming soon.