

## Musings on Immortality

I am sometimes given over to extended periods when I wax philosophical and ponder varied themes. I fully blame Gilch for this condition. During the six years I stayed with him, there is no way I could possibly remember all of the times we discussed mortality, morality, the virtues of being flexible and scores of other topics.

The good old days. With an inwardly turned smirk, I allowed my eyes to quickly scan the street. Little Rock. It wasn't proving to be my favorite city but it could have been worse. And many of the places I'd visited had been just that.

Soon the Malkavian would show up and we'd discuss the job he'd mentioned. Or he wouldn't and I'd go on doing what I'd been doing...surviving; which I had finally come to decide was not enough. I needed a place I could gather some resources, and put into practice what I'd read. A place where I needn't worry about where the next meal was coming from or what vampire might object to my taking it. Sitting in the shadow of a parked car, using my powers of Obfuscation to bend the will of passers-by into ignoring my presence, I smiled quietly to myself.

Of course, with vampires immortality was always a popular topic. I'm not sure just how old Gilch was but he had been fairly old. He'd let just a few too many references slip concerning generals, troop movements, and other such topics of the day popular during the years of the American Civil War for me to think he had been born after that period. Of course, it's quite possible that he dropped clues to even earlier historical periods which I simply never picked up on. It wouldn't surprise me. I wondered if I'd ever made him feel old or just glad that he was no longer so young and foolish?

I know which of the two choices I'd place my bet on, I thought with a grin.

But, great age hadn't made the Nosferatu immortal had it? Simply old. I've noticed that quite a number of vampires seem to consider themselves immortal. A rather foolish conceit, considering just how many vampires were killed or destroyed every year. Did they really think they were immortal? I supposed that some did indeed. How many of those same vampires took all their extra years and simply existed through them? Quite a few. Very few actually seemed to cherish their lives and embrace the changing times. A few vampires even appeared to think of change as a curse.

And we call vampires of the clan Malkavian crazy.

Speaking of Malkavians, a glance at my watch showed another thirty minutes until my appointment with the man I was here to meet. I'd already been through his office and found nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing that suggested he wasn't on the up and up so far as his job offer went. Still, best to be prepared and forewarned whenever possible.

Gilch could have used some forewarning. The lack of which explained why he was now enjoying what he'd referred to as the poor man's immortality. Which means he was now living only in the hearts and memories of myself and the handful of people who knew him or had heard about his exploits. Hell, I don't even know how many of the others who knew him were still alive. If the Triangle War still raged in L.A., probably not many. Yep, the poor man's immortality was definitely the booby prize in regards to eternity.

Did I consider myself immortal? Good question. I supposed in some ways I did. I no longer lived in fear. Gilch had worked that out of me. He'd taught me to defend myself, to avenge myself,

and to live with pain when it must be lived with. Hell, on a few occasions he taught me to love pain because that was all I had. A bit warped' but a useful turn of mind in dark hours to be sure. So, I no longer lived in fear, but did I honestly believe myself immortal?

I'd met a vampire once upon a time in L.A.. An old Ventrue. But this old gentleman hadn't been a particularly talented individual as most of that bloodline tended to be. No, this fellow had been beaten and beaten down at every turn. He had no ambition left. No power and only modest savings and investments which his bloodline prized so highly. Yet, he was undeniably old. Five hundred years if he was a day. And he spent every evening in the same small house...most of it in the same small room. A servant family saw to his needs. Each night he read a small bit of some work of classic literature. Sometimes he met briefly with others for reasons of the court, which was where I had met him, but such occasions were rare. Old as he had been, he truly seemed to be heading for immortality. But why? His life was so boring even grass tired of watching him. That was not the sort of immortality that sparked an interest in me.

Across the street from where I hid in plain sight, the Malkavian drove up and parked. Without a backwards glance he strolled into the office building. We'd soon see if he'd improve my lot in life with a job offer or not. Grinning for no apparent reason, I stood up and walked towards the door he'd passed through.

So did I consider myself immortal? Damn straight I did and I still do. Perhaps my version of immortality was that of the fool or a crazy. A man who's immortality was only a fragile illusion. But sometimes illusion and reality mixed. I was going to be an immortal who actually *lived* forever.

Yesssss.

And I will live every night with that in mind. I will ride the razor blade that is the wild side until it cuts to the bone. I'm going to play with fire until I can dance in the flames and not get burned. I will quietly draw a shroud of power around myself until one evening the people around me realize that I am not a man to be trifled with. Despite all that, I'm still going to take precautions in those areas where I am vulnerable because not everybody realizes that I am immortal, and some of those folks seem to be actively trying to convert me over to the poor man's immortality.

For me, these things would almost certainly no longer be metaphor if there truly was a job offer in my future. I'd fled L.A. after Gilch's death because I hadn't wanted to end up on the front lines of the vampire war raging there. I'd made a lot of stops since then and despite what I'd wanted, I'd found myself out of the frying pan and in the fire more often than not. But I had the nemesis information now. And that information... that could change everything. But I needed money. And a stable haven with somewhere I could safely store my library because it provided maps to paths that nemesis did not. It was time to use the Camarilla as it had used me. As it would probably use me again if this offer panned out. Chances were this job would be putting me on the front lines somewhere.

And that was exactly where I wanted to be.

Time for this immortal to go ride the wild side.

Walking into the building for my appointment, I could feel my grin widening into a smile. Who knows, some day I might pass all these thoughts along and convince some young fool he's immortal too.