

USA Today Bestselling Author of *My Roommate Is a Vampire*

JENNA LEVINE

MY
VAMPIRE
PLUS-ONE

It's love
at first
bite.

"Swoon-worthy
chemistry and
lightning-quick wit."
—New York Times
bestselling author
THEA GUANZON



PRAISE FOR

MY ROOMMATE IS A VAMPIRE

“*My Roommate Is a Vampire* by Jenna Levine is like your favorite red wine—familiar, tasty, and will definitely have you kissing hot strange vampires by the end of the night. Bloody delightful!”

—Ashley Poston, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Dead Romantics*

“This debut romance by Jenna Levine is wonderfully weird and sexy as hell. The amount of care Frederick J. Fitzwilliam takes in figuring out what will get Cassie’s blood pumping! (Not like *that*.) It’s almost enough to make you want to scour Craigslist for your own potential boyfriend, who’ll be head over fangs for you. *My Roommate Is a Vampire* is a whole vibe.”

—Alicia Thompson, *USA Today* bestselling author of *Love in the Time of Serial Killers*

“Jenna Levine’s sensational debut has everything I want in a rom-com—delightfully wry humour, a warm heart, and an utterly adorable romance with the most dreamy hero ever to don a cravat. *My Roommate Is a Vampire* is altogether a kooky, sparkly piece of happiness.”

—India Holton, national bestselling author of *The League of Gentlewomen Witches*

“Jenna Levine delivers a fresh, charming romp full of heart and some of the best kissing scenes I’ve ever read. For someone whose love for both vampires and Chicago runs deep, it was an absolute delight of a novel to sink my teeth into.”

—Isabel Cañas, *USA Today* bestselling author of *The Hacienda*

“*My Roommate Is a Vampire* is a delicious, delightful love story—whimsical, magical, and hilarious, with enough heart to make readers cry and enough heat to make them melt. It’s an ode to love in all its forms—romantic love, but also the love of friends, the love of art, and the process of learning to love yourself. Cassie is warmhearted, chaotically horny, and so relatable, and Frederick J. Fitzwilliam is the exquisitely dressed cinnamon roll vampire of my dreams. This is an incredible debut, and I can’t wait to read whatever story Levine tells next!”

—Sarah Hawley, author of *A Witch’s Guide to Fake Dating a Demon*

“If the world is against Frederick J. Fitzwilliam, then I am against the world. Wildly entertaining, delightfully steamy, laugh-out-loud hilarious, wrenchingly romantic, Levine’s debut folds a charming cast of characters into a deftly written supernatural love story for the ages. Don’t miss the chance to sink your teeth into this!”

—Thea Guanzon, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Hurricane Wars*

“*My Roommate Is a Vampire* is a breezy, clever romp that will leave you laughing so loud you could wake the undead. Jenna Levine is a permanent auto-buy for me.”

—Elizabeth Davis, author of *I Love You, I Hate You* and *The Player Next Door*

“Sweet, cozy romance that isn’t scary or spooky but just very charming.”

—*Town & Country*

“A wonderful and entertaining paranormal romance that begs for a sequel.”

—New York Journal of Books

“Levine clearly had fun writing this lighthearted and memorable addition to the paranormal-romance genre, and lucky us, she invites readers along for the ride.”

—Washington Independent Review of Books

“This humorous debut from Levine is perfect for readers who enjoy the roommates-to-romance trope and a dash of sexy vampire.”

—*Library Journal* (starred review)

“From the dryly witty notes Cassie and Frederick leave for each other to the cast of quirky and endearing secondary characters, everything about this sneaky, sweet, otherworldly rom-com is a delight.”

—*Booklist* (starred review)

“This adorable odd couple proves easy to root for, with Frederick’s awkwardness navigating modern life adding both humor and pathos.... This one is good to the last drop.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

Berkley Romance titles by Jenna Levine

MY ROOMMATE IS A VAMPIRE

MY VAMPIRE PLUS-ONE

MY

VAMPIRE



PLUS-ONE

JENNA LEVINE

BERKLEY ROMANCE

New York

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For the Chaos Muppets

ONE



Bright red Comic Sans text found on an old GeoCities website

SHOULD ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS:

CRIMINAL

EVIL VAMPIRE MASTERMIND

TERRIBLE GUY

COME TO LIGHT

PLEASE EMAIL THE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATELY AT THECOLLECTIVE_1876@HOTMAIL.COM

AMELIA

MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY HAD enjoyed teasing me with the adage *the only sure things in life are death and taxes* ever since I became an accountant.

After hearing it for the hundredth time, though, it stopped being funny. For me—a single, thirty-four-year-old CPA a year away from making partner at a big accounting firm—the only *real* sure things in life were an intractable caffeine addiction every tax season, and my mostly well-intentioned family giving me grief over my life choices.

Most people didn't understand that I loved my job. I loved the way the Internal Revenue Code made careful sense, and how it always gave you the right answer as long as you knew what

questions to ask. Tax work was complex, but it was also neat, orderly, and consistent in a way the rest of life seldom was.

Most of all, though, I loved that I was good at what I did. It was hard to beat the high that came with knowing that very few people could do my job as well as I could.

But the night my world turned upside down, I was questioning my life choices for the first time in recent memory. It was the middle of tax season, which was always my most brutal time of year, but this year it was worse than usual. Mostly because of one absolute nightmare of a client.

The Wyatt Foundation had the biggest budget of any organization I'd ever worked with. In a show of confidence from Evelyn Anderson, the Butyl & Dowidge partner I reported to most frequently, I was handling this file solo. That was the good news. The bad news was within hours of getting the file it was obvious Wyatt was the least organized client I'd ever had.

The Wyatt Foundation was, to use a word you wouldn't find anywhere in the Internal Revenue Code, a shitshow. Its board seemed to have no idea how to run a nonprofit, and its chief financial officer seemed incapable of following simple directions. He'd been sending me new documents daily, some of which were from years I'd already told him the IRS didn't care about, and many of which were impossible to reconcile with other statements they'd sent.

I had less than three weeks to wrap everything up and get Wyatt's filing to the IRS. To say nothing of all my other files that were languishing from inattention.

I was good at working hard. But even though I was an accountant, I was still *human*. And I was nearing the breaking point.

I missed dancing around my Lakeview apartment to Taylor Swift. I missed spending time with Gracie, my temperamental cat. Above all, I missed my bed. Especially the way I used to spend at least seven hours in it every night.

I'd left my apartment at the crack of dawn that morning so I'd have a chance of getting on top of my other work before Wyatt's daily missives arrived. I had been focusing for so long on my Excel spreadsheet that when my phone buzzed with a series of texts, I nearly jumped out of my chair.

I fumbled through my briefcase until I found my phone, then reached for my glasses and slid them on. I'd taken them off hours ago; staring at my computer for too long made my vision blur. I needed to visit an optometrist, but that would have to wait until after tax season. Just like all the other forms of self-care I'd been putting off.

I smiled when I saw the texts were from my best friend, Sophie. She'd been dropping by my apartment every night the past two weeks to feed Gracie and take in my mail while I was working inhuman hours.

SOPHIE: Queen Gracie is fed and your mail is in its usual spot on the counter

SOPHIE: Also, Gracie asked me to ask you if you are coming home soon

SOPHIE: In cat language of course

SOPHIE: She's worried you're working too hard

I smiled. Sophie was so good to me. I glanced at the time and saw it was already six-thirty.
Shit.

If I didn't want to be late for my monthly dinner with my family, I needed to leave the office in the next ten minutes. And I was nowhere near finished with what I'd hoped to get done that day.

AMELIA: I'm actually meeting my family for dinner tonight

AMELIA: Could you apologize to Gracie for me?

SOPHIE: I mean I'm sure she'll forgive you

SOPHIE: She's a cat

SOPHIE: But I'm not a cat and I'm worried about how late you've been working

SOPHIE: You okay?

Not really, I thought. But I wasn't going to dump how stressed I was on Sophie. In addition to being a mom to twin toddlers, her attorney husband had been in San Francisco the past three weeks for depositions. She was no stranger to ridiculous demands on her time; she didn't need to hear me complain about mine.

AMELIA: I'm fine. Just busy.

AMELIA: Tell Gracie I hope to be home by 9:30

AMELIA: Please give her scratches for me and tell her I'm sorry

SOPHIE: Will you be having dinner someplace where you actually can eat something this time?

AMELIA: It's an Italian restaurant this time so hopefully

I'd been a pescatarian since college, and a lactose intolerance that cropped up when I was in grad school meant I was off dairy. Ever since my brother Adam's twins were born eight years ago, though, my dietary needs were usually an afterthought at best when it came to family get-togethers. Because Adam's kids were young, only casual restaurants with a children's menu and a high level of background noise were options. And Dad liked red meat too much to take us anywhere that didn't offer it.

It was fine, though. I was the only one in our family who was single. And I didn't have kids. In the interest of being accommodating, I usually just went along with whatever the group wanted when we got together. Maybe it was the middle child in me, but making as few waves as possible had been my *modus operandi* for as long as I could remember. Sometimes I'd get lucky

and my parents would pick an Italian restaurant with at least a few cheese-and-meat-free pasta options—like tonight. If I wasn't lucky, I'd have to wait until I got home to eat dinner.

As if on cue, my stomach chose that moment to do a comically loud rumble.

SOPHIE: Well I picked up some Chinese for the kids. They're getting fussy so I'm about to take them home, but I'll leave the leftover veggie lo mein for you in your fridge.

AMELIA: You're the literal best, Soph

AMELIA: When does Marcus get back from San Francisco?

SOPHIE: His last deposition is Thursday

SOPHIE: So he'll be back Friday

SOPHIE: In THEORY

AMELIA: You should have him on diaper duty for at least a week straight when he gets back

SOPHIE: Oh, I'm demanding a full month

I smiled at my phone, feeling grateful. Hopefully Sophie would be able to take time for herself again once Marcus was finally back home. She was so giving to others, me included. She deserved to receive occasionally, too.

AMELIA: Thanks Soph

AMELIA: You're the best

AMELIA: When tax season is over, I'm treating you to a fancy dinner and I'm not taking no for an answer

Dinner would likely go until nine, and I didn't think I'd have the energy to go back to the office afterwards. I stuffed Wyatt's latest paperwork into my briefcase, promising myself I'd finish reviewing it at home.

The thirty-second floor was still a hive of activity as I made my way to the elevator. I tried not to let the guilt over leaving at an hour some of the partners might consider *early* wash over me.

Because if I stayed late tonight, I'd be bailing on my family. And a guilt of an entirely different kind would ruin my evening.

.

MY BUILDING'S HVAC SYSTEM RAN nonstop, but it was always chilly in the lobby during the winter on account of the giant floor-to-ceiling windows. That night was no exception. Even still, it looked much colder outside. On the other side of my building's revolving glass doors,

pedestrians were hunched slightly forward in the distinctive way of people trying to get to where they were going in unpleasant weather. The kind of early spring cold snap that always made me wonder why the hell my great-great-grandparents hadn't settled in California instead of Chicago when they came to the United States had rolled through two days earlier. A couple inches of snow had been packed down by foot traffic over the past few days into an icy crust on the sidewalks.

I pulled my black puffer jacket a little more tightly around my body and fished out the thin leather gloves I kept permanently stashed in its pockets. The El stop was only a few blocks away; even if it was as cold outside as it looked, I could handle it for a few blocks.

Bracing myself, I walked into the only revolving door still unlocked at that hour, and hurried outside into the brisk night air—

And was so preoccupied with guilty thoughts of the work I wasn't finishing, and of how I'd probably be late for family dinner, *again*, and of how I'd have to make it up to Sophie for bringing me *lo mein* despite my being a totally absent friend the past few weeks, that I didn't see the guy in the black fedora and bright blue trench coat literally sprinting down the sidewalk until he plowed into me.

“*What—!*”

The impact when we collided made me drop everything I'd been carrying. My briefcase, the gloves I'd been about to put on, the stress I'd been carrying all day like a lead ball in the pit of my stomach—it all fell to the icy sidewalk. The paperwork I'd stuffed into my briefcase just minutes ago spilled out of it on impact, landing in a puddle of icy slush.

I glared at the guy who'd just run into me.

“What the hell!” I snapped.

“Sorry.” The guy's fedora was pulled down so low over his face, it covered most of it, and despite what he'd just said, he didn't *sound* sorry. He sounded distracted, and his body looked coiled for action, like he was milliseconds away from running off in the direction he'd been heading when he slammed into me.

“I doubt you're sorry,” I muttered.

The guy glanced down at my feet where my things lay, and seemed to realize, for the first time, that he'd made me drop everything. The slush puddle had made quick work of the Wyatt financial reports; everything was wet now and would be impossible to read. I'd have to go back to the office and print it all out again, which I really did not have time for.

And—oh god, what if my laptop had cracked when it hit the ground? I quickly scooped up my bag and shuffled through it to make sure my MacBook was okay. Fortunately, it seemed fine.

“I *am* sorry,” the guy said again. “But—look. Since you've kept me from where I was heading for nearly an entire minute now, can you do me a favor?”

The gall of this guy. He could have broken my computer! “*You're asking me* for a favor?” I was about to tell him exactly where he could stick his *favours*—

But then he tilted his head to the right at the same time he pushed his fedora a little farther back on his head, and I got my first real look at him.

The words died in my throat.

Maybe the stress of too many consecutive late nights in the office was finally getting to me. That must have been it. Or maybe it was just because I hadn't dated anyone casually in over a year, or anyone seriously in more than five. Whatever the reason for it, in that moment, he looked more attractive than he had any right to look, given the circumstances. He was fairly tall, probably about six foot two, but I was no slouch in the height department myself, and because of that—and because of the angle at which he'd been wearing his hat until this moment—it had initially been difficult to see much of his face. But now that I *could* see it...

He had high, angular cheekbones. A strong chin that sported at least three days' worth of dark blond stubble. Light-colored eyes that looked, given his fair complexion, as though they might be blue. Though most of his face was still bathed in shadow from his hat, even with its slight repositioning, so it was hard to tell.

I'd always had a thing for blond-haired, blue-eyed guys. A thing that sometimes ended up with me making decisions I'd regret later. Especially when said blond hair and blue eyes came in broad-shouldered, slim-waisted packages.

Like Mr. Fedora Asshole over here.

The fact that I could now see he was wearing a black T-shirt beneath his trench coat that said *Blame Bezos* in bright red letters, as well as a pink gingham skirt that totally clashed with his coat *and* his hat, didn't do anything to dampen my attraction. If anything, it just enhanced the dirtbag Chris Pine look he had going for him.

I closed my eyes and shook my head a little as I tried to get a grip. God, I needed a vacation. The minute tax season was over, I was booking a flight to somewhere warm and sunny.

I tore my eyes from his face. This was ridiculous. *I* was ridiculous. "I am *not* doing you a favor," I somehow managed.

"Please," he implored. The distraction in his voice was gone; in its place was a raw urgency that stunned me. "It won't take long. Please—can you start laughing? As though we are in regular conversation and I am in the process of telling you something very funny?"

I stared at him, reeling from the randomness of the request from this stranger. "I'm sorry, but...*what?*"

"I am trying to avoid some people." His tone was pitched low, his words coming very quickly. As though he had limited time to get them out. "I was trying to avoid them when I... when we..." He gestured expansively between us, and then to the ruined papers at my feet.

"You nearly mowed me down because you're trying to avoid some people?" This was absurd. Though that would explain his mad dash down an icy sidewalk at six-thirty on a Tuesday evening. Concern pricked at me despite my better judgment. Clearly, this guy was more than just passing strange. But what if he was also in some kind of trouble?

As if to validate my concern, he looked over his shoulder, the turn of his head frantic and jerky. When he faced me again, his eyes were bright with what looked like genuine fear. "I'm sorry, I can't explain further. But can you just like...laugh? That way, maybe they'll think you and I have been lost in a riveting conversation this whole time, that I am not the man they are looking for, and they will just...keep going." He paused, then bit his lip, considering my stunned reaction. "Or I suppose you could kiss me instead."

My jaw dropped. “Kiss you?” I was gobsmacked. I didn’t kiss strangers. Not ever. Or, okay, not since a particularly rowdy girls’ weekend back in 2015. But those had been very different circumstances. Circumstances involving colorful beads and a quantity of alcohol unbefitting a CPA on deadline.

A small part of me, though—probably the part of me that hadn’t kissed anyone in about a year and hadn’t had sex for what might as well have been an epoch—imagined what it would be like, kissing this bizarre stranger. He was hot, like burning, despite his odd mannerisms. The confident way he stood, his manner of speech, the bold smolder of those bright blue eyes...

I bet he’d kiss like the world was ending.

I bet it would be *fantastic*.

He held up his hands in front of him in defense, as though he’d interpreted my stunned silence as outrage. “Or, don’t kiss me! That’s also fine! You see, this is why I proposed you pretend laugh with me. While fake kissing is a time-honored way to throw pursuers off the trail—and is also fun as *hell*, let’s be honest—we don’t know each other. And since you seem rather angry with me, I’d assumed you would rather pretend laugh with me than pretend to kiss me.”

He spoke so rapidly I could barely keep up. I had the unique sensation of listening to a record player playing music at twice its normal rate of speed. I stared at him, stupefied. Obviously, there was no chance I was going to kiss this guy, despite my moment of temptation. But laughing? When nothing was funny? That seemed almost as absurd. I took a semester of acting in college, but it had been my lowest grade at the University of Chicago. It was true what they said about accountants: most of us didn’t have much of a sense of humor; fewer had any acting skills.

“I don’t think I can pull off a convincing fake laugh,” I admitted.

“Sure you can.”

“Not when nothing’s funny.”

He looked confused. “There’s nothing to *pull off*. You just...laugh.”

His sincerity seemed so genuine that all at once, I knew he was telling me the truth about this bizarre situation. I didn’t think I could actually help him, but what did I have to lose by trying besides a few extra precious minutes?

“Fine,” I muttered. I took a deep breath and then, a moment later, I did my best attempt at a fake laugh. “Ahahahahahahaha!” I cried out, even as I stood rigid as a board with my hands balled up into tight, anxious fists at my sides. “Oh, you are *so funny!*” I added loudly, for good measure. I sounded ridiculous. I hoped none of my coworkers could see or hear me. This was not how someone gunning for a partnership *behaved*.

As I continued fake laughing, the guy just stared at me. “You weren’t kidding,” he said softly, incredulous. “You really *can’t* do this.”

I glared at him. “I told you.”

“You did,” he conceded. And then a moment later, he threw his own head back—and *laughed*.

To anybody passing by, you’d think the man I was standing with had just been told the funniest joke he’d ever heard in his life. His whole body vibrated with it, his hand floating in the

air as though to touch me on the shoulder, only for him to snatch it back at the last minute and clutch at his stomach.

Fake it may have been, but this man's laughter was infectious. Before I knew what was happening, I was laughing, too—at him, at the ridiculousness of this entire situation—without him even needing to prompt me. Without pretending. Everything felt light inside, in a way I seldom felt during tax season, and had never in my life felt with a stranger.

After a while, our laughter subsided. A moment of silence passed between us, punctuated only by the ubiquitous sounds of Chicago traffic. The guy looked over his shoulder, in the direction he'd originally come from. Whatever he saw this time, or didn't see, made his posture relax.

"I think they're off my trail for now." He looked at me again. "Thank you. I owe you one." And then, abruptly: "Are you an accountant, Amelia Collins?"

"How...how do you know my name? And what I do?" I stammered. A taxi drove by us, leaning on its horn and splattering me with a faint spray of dirty snowmelt. I ignored it and brushed a stray lock of hair out of my face as I tried to get my shit together.

Mr. Fedora Asshole shrugged. "I'm good at spotting accountants." Before I could ask him what he meant by that, one corner of his mouth quirked into something that was half smile, half smirk. I absolutely did *not* notice how full, and soft, his lips looked when he did it.

And then, laughing a little, he inclined his head meaningfully at the pile of papers from my briefcase that still lay in a soggy heap at my feet. I followed the direction of his gaze and immediately felt like a fool.

"The header on that paper says *Wyatt Foundation Tax Filings*," he pointed out, unnecessarily, as a sharp gust of wind made the ends of his trench coat flap around his legs. "The footer says *Amelia Collins*. I don't know much about...well. About much. But I do know that words like *tax filings* and *accountant* sort of go hand in hand. And I feel it's reasonable to assume *Amelia Collins* is you."

Damnit, I should *not* have found his voice sexy when he said all that. I couldn't help it. It was a deep voice, rich and smooth, and as sinful as silk sheets. Even when he was accusing me of something as mundane as being an accountant.

"Yeah," I admitted, even more flustered. "That's me."

He flashed me a full smile—there and then gone again, like mist at dawn. I shivered for reasons having nothing to do with the cold night air.

He cleared his throat. "I gotta go. But, since you are correct that this collision was partially my fault—"

I scoffed. "*Partially?*"

He shrugged. "If you'd not been so distracted, you probably would have seen me coming. But since, yes, I am partly to blame..."

He knelt down and scooped up the papers that had fallen from my briefcase. He stood up, then handed them back to me.

They were soaked through now. Useless. I took them from him anyway, the tips of my fingers brushing up against the sides of his hands in the process. He wore no gloves; his hands

were like icicles.

It must have been even colder outside than I'd realized.

"Thanks," I said, feeling a little winded.

"You're welcome." He stood up, and brushed off the front of his legs. "Now, I must be off. But do let me know if I can somehow make this up to you, later." He winked at me. "I owe you one."

It was an empty offer, of course. I'd never see him again. I floundered for something to say in response to such an awkward comment from a stranger.

Before I could come up with a reply, he shook his head. "Good luck with wherever it is you were headed in such a distracted rush, Amelia Collins."

Without another word, he turned on his heels and sprinted away.

"What a weirdo," I muttered under my breath. Not much rattled me anymore, but whatever had just happened between me and that guy...

Whatever that had been, it had rattled me.

But I didn't have time to think about it. I had the Brown Line to catch, a family dinner to attend, and way too much work to do to waste another second thinking about that peculiar stranger and the giddy way his laughter made me feel.

TWO



Excerpt from The Annals of Vampiric Lore, Seventeenth Edition

“Index of Notable Vampiric Organizations,” pp. 2313–14

THE COLLECTIVE

Original accounts from vampires in the court of William the Great suggest The Collective, as it is now colloquially known, first formed in England in the eleventh century A.D. as a social club for dilettante fledglings from powerful vampire families. While The Collective still serves a social function for current members, The Collective’s central mission has grown dramatically over the centuries, expanding far beyond its original scope.

Today, the group is primarily focused on three things. First: celebrating their rarefied lineage (eligibility for membership remains limited to those who can directly trace their bloodlines to the original founding Eight). Second: creating new vampires. And third: vigilante justice for wrongs that many in the vampire community consider trifles.

While the vampiric community has historically turned a blind eye to most of The Collective’s antics, it has drawn more criticism in recent years. Some of its more vocal detractors have argued a group so affluent and storied ought to find better things to do with its time.

REGINALD

I LEANED BACK IN FREDERICK'S leather armchair and reread the The Collective's note. It was crumpled from how frequently I'd gone over it since it arrived at my home four nights ago.

I had to admit that scribbling their threat in what looked like blood but smelled like raspberry syrup was impressive. An admirable commitment to the bit—even if the bit involved wanting to kill me.

“On the one hand,” Frederick began, “I’m not surprised these people are furious.”

For what felt like the thousandth time in the past four days, I went back over the circumstances that had caused this predicament. “Even if I fucked up—”

“If?” Frederick asked, incredulous.

“Okay, fine,” I conceded. “I did fuck up. I admit that. Even so, it’s hard to understand why they’re still this angry with me. It’s been a *really* long time.”

Frederick got out of his chair and began pacing his living room, hands clasped behind his back. He always did this when he was thinking. Between the two of us, Frederick had always been the more circumspect.

It was part of why he was so annoying—the man couldn’t even order dinner from the South Side blood bank without agonizing over his choices for days—and why I knew I couldn’t handle this situation without him.

“You’re right,” he finally said. “It was over a century ago. Even I didn’t hold my grudge against you for that long.” Frederick stopped pacing to admire a new painting his girlfriend had recently hung up behind the leather sofa. Although, calling it a *painting* was generous. Cassie called herself a *found art artist*. The framed picture Frederick was looking at had McDonald’s soda straws and a bunch of other stuff glued to the canvas. *Treasures*, she called them. *Crap* was what it looked like to me.

But there’d be time to criticize Cassie’s so-called art later. For now, there was preserving my life to think about.

“I’d have hoped they’d have found something better to worry about over the past hundred and fifty years,” I muttered.

Frederick raised an eyebrow. “Like what?”

“Like...oh, Hades, I don’t know.” I shook my head and ran a distracted hand through my hair. “Climate change, maybe.”

Frederick shot me a skeptical look.

“No, really,” I continued. “Climate change is definitely more important to vampire life in the twenty-first century than a party faux pas from over one hundred years ago that *might* have resulted in slight calamity.”

“Slight calamity?” Frederick asked, incredulous.

I didn’t blush anymore. I couldn’t; the blood stopped flowing when a person turned. But if I *could* blush, I’d probably have been doing it then. “Depending on how you view things, you could even say I’d saved those people’s sorry little lives.”

I turned away before I could see the face Frederick undoubtedly made at my claim, then crumpled up The Collective’s letter and threw it on the floor. I wished Frederick had a fireplace I could throw it into. Watching it catch fire and disintegrate into ash...well. I’d never had the