

FANGS THE SEQUEL

by Hera Lindsay Bird



Madeline and Lydia were at the kitchen table, sorting through a box of stuff. There was nothing valuable, just a few amulets and newspaper clippings, but Lydia wanted to be an archaeologist, and everything from Madeline's basement was at least two centuries old. They were examining a curious music box – bought by Madeline at auction during the French Revolution – when Zac came downstairs. He was clutching a piece of paper. A flyer.

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Zac scowled. “I don’t want to go with the *mosquito*,” he muttered.

This time, Mr Sanderson did look up. “Apologise, please,” he said.

“Honestly, it doesn’t matter,” Madeline mumbled – not that Zac was about to apologise. He threw the flyer on the ground and stalked off.

Madeline was a vampire. Not the bloodsucking type – she was vegetarian – but the locals were still afraid of her. She tried taking this in her stride. She was a member of the undead; being scary was an occupational hazard. But if Madeline was honest, people’s attitudes hurt her feelings – Zac’s especially. She came to his house. He *knew* her. Madeline had tried winning Zac over, making spooky jokes and goofing around. One time, she even gave him an arrowhead, but somehow, it had made him even more wary.

Lydia shut the music box and carefully put it back. “Don’t mind my little brother,” she said. “He’s a wimp. He sleeps with a night light! And if you’re a mosquito, he’s a dung beetle.”

Madeline laughed. She hoped it sounded convincing.

“Come to the fair with us,” Lydia said. “It’ll be fun. Promise.”

“But *everyone* hates me, not just Zac.”

Lydia sighed. “They just need to get used to you. Give them time.” It was no use arguing. Besides, time was something Madeline had plenty of.

On the night of the fair, Zac threw a tantrum. Eventually, he came downstairs with a big yellow scarf round his neck. Madeline pretended not to notice, but Mr Sanderson was amused. "Will you girls be warm enough?" he asked. "You might catch cold!"

"Don't worry about me," Madeline said. "Vampires have excellent immune systems."

Zac stuck close to Lydia as they walked to the fair. When they got there, he wanted to do everything. They started off at the mirror maze, followed by the Ferris wheel and the shooting gallery. The mirror maze was boring – Madeline didn't have a reflection – but the Ferris wheel was excellent, and because she'd learnt to use a pistol in the Wild West, the shooting gallery was a piece of cake. Madeline hit every target, bang in the middle, winning a giant stuffed octopus – but when she turned to show the octopus to Lydia, Zac was gone.

They retraced every step. They checked the toilets and the candyfloss stand. There was no sign of a boy in a big yellow scarf.

"I'm going to *kill* him," Lydia wailed.

"He'll be fine," Madeline said. "I got lost at a street party on VE Day!" But a tight knot of anxiety was forming in her stomach. A boy was missing. She was meant to take care of him. It would be bad enough if she wasn't a vampire, but she was – and everyone knew it. What if the little brat didn't turn up? People would assume the worst. She had sucked him dry like a human juice box, and now she was digesting his blood at the fair!

For a brief moment, panic set in, and Madeline considered running away. She'd done it before, lots of times – but one look at her friend's face brought Madeline back to her senses. She squeezed Lydia's hand. "Let's split up. We'll cover more ground that way."

Lydia decided to double-check the Ferris wheel. Madeline stood very still, considering her options. She breathed deeply to help her think. Of course. The haunted castle! You had to be twelve to get in, but Zac would've found a way to sneak past.





The haunted castle stood on the edge of the fair. Tombstones dotted the front lawn, and a red light glowed from the upstairs windows. Inside was even worse. The cobwebs were clearly fake, and the green mist rising from the piano was too random for words. Madeline told herself this was no time to be critical – she had to find Zac. So she ignored the old woman bent over a cauldron, and she ignored the tinny wailing coming through the speakers. Instead, she began to climb the stairs.

An enormous window flooded the stairwell with moonlight, and that's when she saw them: a man in a black velvet cape and Zac. The man was slowly advancing, fangs gleaming. Zac huddled away from him in terror.

"Dad!" Madeline shouted. She took the stairs two at a time.

When she reached the landing, she saw it wasn't her father – it was another vampire. He was wearing a red bow tie, and his eyebrows were heavily pencilled. Ridiculous! Madeline snatched a broomstick, which had been leaning spookily against the wall, and began to wallop the vampire around the legs. She was mad but still careful to use the soft end.

"Eating. Children. Isn't. *Nice*."

"Hey! Stop!" the vampire yelped. "I wasn't trying to eat anyone, I swear. I'm just an actor."

"That's exactly the kind of thing a vampire would say," Madeline replied. She had experience in this department.



“My name’s Dan. I’m a philosophy student. This is just a summer job. I can prove it – look.” Dan spat his fangs out onto the floorboards. They lay there, fake and harmless in their small puddle of drool.

Zac had recovered from the attack. He reached for the fangs and examined them with great interest while Madeline helped the student up.

“I should have known,” she said. “Those eyebrows! And nobody wears bow ties like that anymore.”

Dan went to make himself a cup of tea, and Madeline turned to Zac. He had pocketed the fangs. Now he was examining her. His face showed curiosity instead of fear. This was new.

“I need to find Lydia,” Madeline said. “She’ll be freaking.” Zac nodded, and to Madeline’s surprise, he put the broom back and followed her.

Lydia wasn’t freaking. She was furious.

“How dare you run away like that,” she yelled. “I’ll never take you anywhere again.” Zac was untouched by his sister’s fury. Instead, he looked like he’d just had the best evening of his life, which only irritated Lydia further. “Where *were* you?” she demanded.

“Watching Madeline beat up a philosophy student with a broom. It was *awesome*.” Madeline had never seen him so animated. “And look what I got,” he added, pulling the plastic fangs from his pocket. Before Madeline or Lydia could stop him, Zac put the fangs in his mouth and smiled.

“Gross!” said Lydia. “There’ll be loads of germs on those. You’re beyond disgusting.”

“Don’t worry,” said Zac, giving Madeline a cheeky grin. “Us vampires have excellent immune systems.”



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