

## **A Warm Body**

What they don't tell you, when you sell your soul, is that you become a hunter. No, not the ones that pull their kids out of school on the first day of hunting season to get that first sacred deer and dress in neon and camouflage, nor the demon hunters that scald you with holy water or exorcise you until you're back in the cage that is Hell. But you become a body hunter. You spend eternity floating around the ether trying to find a soul weak enough to force down and enter their body, if only for a short amount of time. Babies are always good for that; they've got no real personality yet so people don't even notice a change when you take control. Almost-stillborn babies, the ones who're right on the brink of death, are even better because then you come away with that warm feeling like you're doing something right for the parents, although, given my history, my perception of "right" might be a little skewed.

But you hunt for that body that'll carry you ten, twenty, fifty years down the road until you've got to start hunting again. And after a while, you start seeing this as some sort of evil gift. Yeah, you have to actively go looking for a warm body to live in, but at least you're not rotting in Hell with Lucifer as your prison guard. Let me tell you, that guy's mind? A bag of feral cats. Batshit crazy to say the least. So yeah, I'm granted this terrible privilege and I use it to the best of my "God-given" ability.

I sold my soul so I could make my wife come. Yeah, it sounds ridiculous, but that's just how it happened. The Doctor said she had "hysteria" and the only way to cure it was to make her orgasm. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't do it. So with a kiss to Crowley, I sold my soul to be better at sex. You get ten years, that's it, but I thought helping my wife would erase that fact. That night, my wife claimed that I'd grown about two inches and it was like she was with a different man. To an extent, I guess that's true, and life was looking up for both of us. But ten years goes by faster than expected and all of a sudden, Crowley's back to make good on your promise.

I've inhabited maybe five or ten bodies since I gave Crowley the kiss that sold my soul. Lines blur and you forget that you died almost two hundred years ago. I've been a 1950's housewife, complete with an apron and meatloaf on the table by the time the husband got home; an elderly great-grandma who was slowly losing her mind—I had fun with that one; a soldier in the Vietnam war that survived two deployments and about 50 gunshot wounds; and most recently, a kid named Nick. He was one of those almost-stillborns; the Doctor couldn't get the fluid out of his lungs and get him to cry. I'd been hovering in the NICU for a while waiting for this angel of a child, Ruby, to get close to her last breath before I could swoop in and get used to a new skin suit when I heard some commotion going on in the maternity ward. A baby was about to die and I seized the opportunity, forced

the fluid out of his lungs as only someone who'd been on the receiving end of an exorcism could, and cried out some sweet baby screams. From then on, I became Nicholas Clark Rogers II, and I began another stint as a human.

Babies are weird, really fucking weird. They eat when they want, they sleep when they want, piss and shit when they want, and the parents just cater to that kind of abuse until the kid's old enough to know better. And the weirdest part about babies? They physically know how to do next to nothing, save for the aforementioned eating, sleeping, peeing, shitting, and crying. So when I got into the body, I had to relearn how to do *everything*. Everything I tried to say came out as a grunt or gurgle, and when I got frustrated I'd start to cry. I had to relearn what it felt like to sit in a wet diaper until I could get changed into a dry one. I had to relearn how to roll over, crawl, and eventually walk. But Nick's parents helped a lot, which I guess I'm grateful for, given all the shit I've seen.

Nick's parents, Marceline and Nick Sr., had a lot of trouble trying to get pregnant and when they did the first time, Marcy miscarried and almost decided never to try again. The baby that I became, Nick Jr., was a mistake and was skating on thin ice for the whole pregnancy. So when he was born and miraculously came back from the almost-dead, they cherished him and attended to every single thing he did as a way of giving thanks. So I guess I did them a favor, taking over and doing the whole baby thing. It was a solid little give and take; they wiped my ass

and in return, I gave them the miracle of life. It never hurt that Marcy had a great set of jugs on her and seeing them up close and personal almost eight times a day was a very titillating experience for someone whose been around as long as I have.

We lived in this tiny apartment in North Philadelphia, so the schools aren't so great but the rent is cheap. Marcy and Nick Sr. wanted the best for 'Lil Nicky Jr.' so they sent me to parochial school; tuition wasn't terribly expensive and I would be getting a better education. They were pretty progressive parents; they never went to church, voted for Bill Clinton, tried to eat organic, and partook in a community garden. What this meant was that I was never baptized, nor did they ever take me inside the walls of a church. I laugh at it now, but I'll never not be thankful for that. After being on the receiving end of one too many forced baptisms and exorcisms gone wrong, you start to fear that someone will throw holy water on you and scream at the moment your skin starts to sizzle because they realize you're not one of God's own.

Anyway, I learned the basics of the Catholic tradition, quietly scoffing under my breath at the kids who blindly followed what the nuns would teach, thinking that if they prayed enough, the gay would go away or Jesus would save them all. Yeah right, kiddos, you're fucked from the start and no amount of repenting can save you. *The universe is flawed and you're a part of it, God ain't gonna do shit*, I would think to tell them on a daily basis. But Sister Pam would rattle on about the

salvation in Jesus's hanging on the cross and lead the class in prayer while I closed my eyes and thought about the pretty girl sitting in the front row of religion class.

Her name was Amelia. We went to school together for twelve years. She always had shoulder length black hair and this cute little button nose. We became friends when she noticed that no one else talked to me at recess and decided out of the goodness of her little Catholic heart that she would reach out to me. She knew I didn't pray in class and almost always took the Lord's name in vain, but she was determined. I sometimes wonder if she knew how much of a missionary she was being that day on the playground, trying to help this unknown demon boy find friendship and, in turn, the "redeeming power of Jesus Christ," (those were her words, not mine). The worst part about being so enamored with this little raven-haired angel was that I wanted to ruin her. I wanted to take that look of utter hope and joy out of her eyes and make them flash black, the way mine did when I was alone. It's disgusting how much we wanted to save each other and I still wonder if it was even worth it.

I watched this girl grow up from a pretty little girl to a hot young woman, with curves like hills and skin like porcelain. Watching her in that little plaid skirt and white button down shirt was some sort of sick joke for the rest of the boys in Catholic school, but for me it was a delicious sin. I never stopped wanting to ruin her, to push her up against a wall and fuck the innocence right out of her. I'd feel

bad about thinking this way but I'm already committed to Satan for the rest of eternity so it's not like I've got any gatekeepers to impress. I stopped feeling guilt 150 years ago, so no number of wet dreams and dirty fantasies would ever make me stop thinking the way I do, especially about her.

Something in her changed when she was sixteen. Amelia stopped trying so much to get me to come to Jesus, to pray with her in school, and to come to church on Sunday mornings. It was around that time that we started "dating" the way high schoolers do; holding hands in the hallways and never actually going on dates, calling each other boyfriend/girlfriend and having clandestine make-out sessions in her bedroom before her parents got home when we were supposed to be studying. People always thought we were a weird pairing, this classic beauty with an ungracefully gawky kid whose eyes seemed a little too dark for our classmates liking, but she didn't care because she said we were in love. Well, she was in love and I was in definite lust with the way her hips moved when she walked and the way her lips quirked up when she was quietly content with the way things were going.

I asked her one night if she ever wanted to have sex. We were making out in the backseat of her black Honda Civic two weeks after graduation, my hands under her black lace bra and her hand fondling the tent in my jeans.

"Do you want to do it?" I asked through heaving breaths.

“Not unless we’re married,” she replied as she arched into my touch.

“You can’t actually be serious about that shit, Meels,” I said, moving to pull off her shirt. She paused and moved her hands away from the front of my jeans.

“You’re not even baptized. Maybe if you were, I’d consider it,” she said, looking me dead in the eyes, before ducking back in to kiss my neck.

“Yeah, okay, sure,” I muttered under my breath as I felt a hickey beginning to form on my collarbone. I dropped the subject after that, too preoccupied with the fact that the teenaged body that I was occupying was going to come in the too tight jeans I was wearing before I’d even gotten her top off.

We went to sleep that night tucked away in my twin bed at home in North Philly. Marcy and Nick Sr. had gone away for the weekend and I was left to my own devices, with Amelia there to keep me company. I was curled around her warm body, dreaming of the day when she’d just give up the ghost and let me in; I was tired of waiting and hadn’t gotten laid in a good thirty years. But in the middle of the night I was eased awake with Amelia’s dulcet voice. I barely opened my eyes to see her standing over me with a bottle of holy water and a bible in her hands. She was whispering, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” when she poured the holy water on my body. I seized in pain, feeling the holy water hit my skin and sizzle before I could stop her.

“What the fuck are you doing?!” I screamed at her, watching the smoke rise from my burning skin. My eyes turned black in my skull as I stared at her in horror. The body that I had known for the past nineteen years was turning on me and I wanted to escape. My mouth hung open and I felt like I was just on the verge of puking up my soul.

“What the FUCK are you? Are you a demon?!” She shouted back at me, more holy water sloshing out of the bottle and making its way onto my face. I gripped my cheek and tried to pull the skin off before the burning pain set in again.

“The fuck else would I be, you little bitch?” The words escaped through clenched teeth when I remembered that she wouldn’t sleep with me until I was baptized. I cackled at the thought; that’s when she started speaking in Latin and I knew I was fucked. So much for getting my hands on her tight little body; soon enough I wouldn’t have one of my own.

“Exorcizamus te, omnis immundus spiritus, omnis satanica potestas, omnis incursio infernalis adversarii, omnis legio, omnis congregatio et secta diabolica,” she shouted, her eyes closed and the bible held firmly in front of her.

“Jesus fucking Christ!” I yelled back, “Where did you even learn this shit?” I could feel myself starting to leave the body, trying to resist with every word she spoke.



“I watch a lot of Supernatural, you asswipe! Ergo, draco maledicte. Ecclesiam tuam securi tibi facias libertate servire, te rogamus, audi nos.” And with those words, the mouth on Nick’s body opened up and I was exorcised straight to Hell, a black plumage of smoke exiting through his too plump lips. The last thing I remember was his body hitting the ground with a loud *thunk*.

I should’ve known not to get involved with a Catholic girl. I was always told Catholic girls bring trouble. You find yourself lusting after one, but instead of breaking your heart, she’ll break your body and send you to Hell. Jeez, I don’t know if Nick even survived that, because most bodies don’t. They end up limp on the ground with no explanation of how or why they died. It’d be a shame for me to find out anyway, because if I knew how Marcy or Nick Sr. took it, I’d end up trying to sell my soul again to get them their kid back, maybe this time, one that wasn’t such a demon child.

I guess I’m stuck down here in Hell for a while, waiting in this never-ending line, only to reach the front just to get sent back to the end again. Maybe the floodgates’ll open by accident and they’ll let some demons out, but don’t count on Crowley to make any mistakes. I don’t get to hunt anymore, I just get to sit here and stew. No more warm bodies for me to find, no more skin suits to curl up in, no more trying to corrupt those Good Catholic Girls. But if you’re lucky enough to get the chance to leave Hell and you only take one thing away from you, it should be

this: don't fuck it up. You're lucky that you get to live more than once, so make it worth something. I may spend the rest of eternity rotting in Hell, but goddamn did I have a good time as Lil Nicky Jr. Fuck some shit up, live so the Westboro Baptist Church pickets your funeral, and, as the old Olay commercials used to say, "Love the skin you're in."