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The Twilight of Infinite Desire

RANDALL E. AUXIER and EILEEN TOWNSEND

17 Magazine St.
New Orleans, LA 70130

November 14th, 1983

Chère Paulie,

It was such a treat to make your acquaintance two weeks ago at the gathering of the River Fellowship. I have returned to New Orleans without incident, and I am always relieved to find that barge inspection remains lax and that the dock workers are still as corrupt and greedy as the devil could imagine. Without plentiful mortal vice, travel for our kind would be most vexing. Fortunately, the flourishing of mortal vice seems as certain as taxes, and, as you have learned, more certain than death.

The gathering must have been a bit much for you to take in, I would think, given your recent descent into our, well, shall we say, our unenvied condition? Such affairs are uncommon, but needed every quarter-century or so to ensure that our common interests are explicit and maintained. The recent effluviante of mortal interest in our kind, in its reliable cycles, occasions these congresses, since an assessment of the new variations in their stories, and their likely long-term effects, calls for our collective wisdom.

I think we are all agreed that the frenzy over the Michael Jackson recording is of no significance apart from its having piqued the curiosity of so many young people, who are now reading the “blessed” writings of Anne Rice. Last week I heard that the entire World Association is incensed, having concluded that one among our River Fellowship blabbed to that pesky woman. I mean, for the sake of hell, she certainly made up the details, but the outline of the story is true. I personally knew “Louis” and “Lestat” and even “Claudia.” And being a Parisian for many centuries, I was there at the founding of the Théâtre des Vampires. They are none too happy, by the bye, about having been publicly exposed, but they have gotten their just desserts as far as I am concerned. Excess may be the next thing to true satisfaction, but it has never been a part of wisdom. (They weren’t really destroyed of course, and the character of Armand is pure fiction—I would imagine him to be the invention of our betrayer, not of Mrs. Rice.)

In any case, the few times before, when loose lips and sloppy fangs have exposed us to danger, the public ignored and soon forgot the stories--or, as in the case of the Brontës (and whoever was spilling the beans to them, bless his worthless hide), the mortal public was simply too dense to understand the instruction being given. Of course, the sisters were taken care of, but that sainted blabbermouth deserves nothing lower than heaven itself for such lapses in secrecy. The English are among the most competent vampires you’ll encounter, but their reputation for discretion has always been exaggerated. If you have secrets to keep, you’ll do better with the Swiss or the Dutch.

As you will discover, Cher Paulie, we don’t really develop “friendships,” in the proper sense of the word, and indeed, it is a stretch even for us to become “fond” of one another, but we do depend upon each another in various unhealthy ways. Even then, there are degrees among the unclean, and so, while hope is not given to us, aspiration is, and I aspire to strike one of the unhealthiest dependencies between us that might be conceived. And after all, desire is the key to everything, I think. Would it not be in your interest as well?

I am the oldest of our kind in the New World. It is difficult to argue with success, no? And I confess I have some difficulties, these days, keeping up with the pace of change. I believe you could be of some service to me, as I could be of some protection to you. Let us say that you are, oh, my “niece.” Negotiating the niceties of the nightworld is something you will need to know about, and I believe a discreet alliance at this time is very much in your interest, as it is in mine.

If you incline to accepting my offer, perhaps I could persuade you to begin with (my how I hate this), Anne Rice’s novel. The plight of “Louis” early in his immortal existence is a common one--and never before exposed to public view. As you already know, the transition is very difficult for some of us. It was for me. Perhaps you have been squeamish about your hunting. Perhaps not. You will never know hope again, but you may aspire. You will have no joy, but satiety you are allowed. You will know no peace, but power is available, and there will be no patient or kind love, but desire can become, for you, its own end. “Lestat” was a fool and he still is. Don’t be like him--be smart.

The first thing you will have to work out is your dependency on . . . oh, what was his name, there in Memphis? The one who likes posing as a campus minister. In any case, you are clearly an observant and promising companion, and we have centuries to consider. Oh, and please learn French. I despise this barbaric parlance.

Believe me, I am always yours sincerely,

Étienne Lavec

222 S. Cooper
Memphis, TN 38104

November 23rd, 1983

Dear Mr. Lavec,

You're right about this whole vampire thing being a little much, a little fast. I knew campus life would be a big change, and that it would test my values, but no one ever prepped me for the challenges of a campus afterlife! I thought that joining the Interfaith House and going to worship group were the safe way to live at school--particularly after I met "Dan," who was so good at leading the Up All Night weekend service. I thought he was just super nice to me because I've always been a fun and faithful girl, so it was pretty freaking surprising when our relationship took this turn! My mom always said that older men want you for the wrong reasons, but I don't think she could have imagined these particular "wrong reasons."

Now that "Dan" (he hasn't told me his real name, and I'm not buying that it's "Dan Christensen." I mean, come on. He's a vampire.) has turned me, he wants to leave the Memphis State Ministry and go somewhere else, where he wants me to pose as his fiancée and be super charming so that all the young people will think we're really trustworthy. "Dan" isn't a very down-to-earth vampire. He can't just suck on a person and get it over with; he wants them to believe he's saving their soul in the process--some wack-job interpretation of the "think of me when you drink this" Bible verse. The guy has some serious issues.

As for me, I like doing it quick and simple. I used to do Meals on Wheels when I was human, so I've been sort of forcibly returning myself the favor, if you catch my drift. The old people never know what hit them.

Mr. Lavec, there's a lot I have to learn. For instance, it surprised me a bunch at the recent gathering that if you drink from a person with AIDS, not only do you not get the disease, but you're

not even gay afterwards! (I'd kind of thought differently, because of how all the boy vampires dress . . . it's kind of, frilly, you know? If you want to talk about "the pace of change," let's look at capes. Not really something you buy at Sears these days.)

And all this Anne Rice stuff is blowing my mind. I started Interview with the Vampire, and it's really freaking me out. I get it that we're, like, the top of the food chain and everything, but do we all have to be so morbid about it? I think everybody has just had about a thousand years to think about themselves, and not enough fresh air. I, for one, would rather think of myself like a bear or a lion or a really heavy falling thing--a semi-natural cause of death, not some bla-bla-bla-dark-angel madness.

The one thing that really bugs me so far is that I used to be such a people person, you know? And now I can't even go to a party without feeling like the girl with bad hair and glasses--except, instead of glasses, I have fangs and the desire to kill. Gives "sucking face" a whole different ring.

Also, I know that God said "don't kill," but then he made Abraham almost kill Isaac as if that was all okay, so I guess turning me into a pasty-faced vamp is the clearest celestial command I've ever gotten to sort of step outside the moral lines. Maybe it's like a heavenly population control thing?

I'd really be into being your vampire niece. Mostly because I am going to have to get away from "Dan Christensen." I can't pretend to be someone's fiancée--I'm only nineteen! Plus, he is such a creep-job. I think you could teach me a few things. So, I have some questions: How did you get to be a vampire so long ago? Who turned you? Also, this might be kind of personal, but who were you before you got turned? I need some major details. Because, honestly, you're not the sort of stranger I'd get into a car with if I weren't an immortal predator.

About the French: American Sign Language was my language elective at Memphis State, but, like, I haven't exactly been

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researching night classes. I'll see what I can do about picking up some French. Hey, maybe if more of y'all had been vampires back in the day, you wouldn't have lost all those times to the "blabbermouth" British! Haha, no offense.

Yours Truly,

Paulie Dori Williams

17 Magazine Street
New Orleans, LA 70130

January 16th, 1984

Chère Paulie,

Please forgive my delayed response. Matters of our collective concern have been dominating my attentions. I cannot say a great deal about these problems now, but it should suffice that your observations about AIDS are more than incidental to our present troubles. The mortals are likely to remain perplexed about the origins of the pathogen, but perhaps that is because they have not yet imagined that we have our own sciences, on the other side of the coil, aimed at solving our problems. Sometimes things develop in directions unforeseen, but one must admit that hunting is better now than it has been since the last Yellow Fever epidemic (which you won't remember, but that was when I relocated to this lovely and decadent city--my, how decades seem like weeks to me at this point; I can no longer quite understand the idea of "nineteen years").

I am certainly pleased that you are willing to be my "niece." One truth in the novel of Mrs. Rice is that, as the mysterious "Armand" says, the world changes but we do not.

It is an effort to connect with every new age. There is something both familiar and disturbing about the character of Armand, but I cannot place my finger upon it. In any case, thank you for extending the hand of mutual benefit, and I can take care of Dan Christensen. He cannot move to a new locale without leave from me. As you will gradually learn, the "reward" for remaining active in every new age is that power accrues to him who does. What, then, are your wishes relative to your maker? I can see to most any reasonable request.

Well, Paulie, my dear, there is too much to tell for a letter of polite length, but I will commence a story that can be resumed, perhaps, in another missive. Our society mirrors that of mortal life in ways the mortals cannot see or quite fathom. But just as we have our scientists, we have our statesmen, our artists, and even our philosophers. Usually our immortal vocations follow something of our mortal proclivities, talents, and interests. That is why you still like to draw--you are something of an artist, I think you mentioned when we met. I encourage you to continue developing that interest. It is not so much desirable that we cling to our human passions, but the opportunity you have been given is for the development of beauty, knowledge, and power indefinitely. As you are coming to suspect, mortals are at a great disadvantage relative to us, since we have time to assimilate our learning indefinitely, and to refine our techniques and talents. Most innovations in the arts, the sciences, and even philosophy, begin with our kind and spread gradually into the lower quarters. The exceptions to this are few indeed.

In my case, I was a student of philosophy, and in those days pursuing any academic field meant taking on an official place in the Church, including vows of celibacy (that no one kept, of course). In time I rose to Master, but my Doctor, the finest mind in Paris, quite unbeknownst to me, was not human. His name was Siger de Brabant. You may read about him, if you like, in the specialized encyclopedias. These were troubled times in the University. The native Parisian student fraternities and the rival Picard fraternities (those attached mainly to provincial faculty--

Siger came from what we now call Belgium) erupted into riots.

In the end, the most progressive thinkers, we were later called the “Latin Averroists,” were run out of the city. The secret order of things among us began to crumble, which I later discovered was a productive alliance between mortal and immortal, together to grasp the nature of God. Our supreme leader was actually a mortal, whose name in Latin was Thomas Aquinas. His reputation has continued to grow in the time since. My Doctor, Siger, was his principal immortal collaborator. When everything fell to pieces, we were all on the run, branded as heretics. That was when Siger turned me. I had no understanding then.

He bade me, very much against my will, to drain our Chief Doctor and not to turn him. I now believe this was an act of loyalty, perhaps even pre-arranged, saving Thomas from the flames of the heretic and sending him where he wanted to be, in heaven. Indeed, two years later, the teachings of Aquinas and Siger were condemned by the Bishop of Paris. But at the time, Siger told me I was to drain Thomas as revenge for an affront, because Thomas had written the vampires out of existence in his greatest work, saying that immortal beings could not possess carnal natures, and that among immortals, only pride and envy were within the purview of our “sinful” actions. You may consult this writing in English translation, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Questions 63 and 64, the so-called “Treatise on Angels.” Yet, I find nothing offensive in the Treatise, then or now, and incline to believe the Angelic Doctor was actually covering up our existence, for mutual benefit. We were almost unknown to European mortals at that time, since we had only begun exploring Europe a century or so earlier. The first vampires in Europe came back with the Crusaders, as you might suspect, from our more ancient abodes in Persia and Egypt.

But I did as I was told and drained the Doctor, which took a while--he was not a small man. I did not appreciate at the time how excellent and subtle is the taste of a chaste Italian. If anything, I suffer these days from an excessive refinement of

taste. Americans remind me of the heavy Bordeaux wines we had in those days, complex mixtures, some almost accidentally nice, others very difficult to endure. I stand on my judgment that Italian pure varietals, taste best, especially those from Umbria (I mean the populace, not the wines--perhaps you may be fortunate to find an Umbrian immigrant to taste among your rolling cuisine).

Anyway, this episode of my life ended when Siger was found out and sent to his permanent hell by a group of monks. It happened in Orvieto just a few years later. I was then "freed" from my master by this, but sooner than I would have preferred. I have continued with philosophy, and indeed with philosophers. I am particularly drawn to the problem of the nature of the self in relation to desire. Are you interested in philosophy? Perhaps you had a class or two? I was drawn to taste the Kantian there at your university, until I learned he was an Episcopalian.

At all events, do tell me of your interests, your art, your reading especially, and what you want done with your maker.

Ever Thine,

Étienne Lavec

222 S. Cooper
Memphis, TN 38104

February 3rd, 1984

Dear Mr. Lavec,

I finished the Anne Rice book. I told Dan to bug off for awhile, because "I had some serious thinking to do" (Yeah right. Like,

what, am I going to sit around saying “Okay, Paulie, you have fangs now. Let’s monologue about it for twelve hours.” Boring.), and holed up at my favorite local twenty-four-hour joint, the Steak and Egg Kitchen. The place is a real Memphis classic, and the breakfast steak there is (well, it was) really great--totally undercooked. I used to think I could actually live on the stuff.

Anyway, about this Anne Rice book, you and I have a few things to talk about.

First of all, I didn’t get what everybody was so upset about all the time in the book. Every single frickin’ page is Fatal-Passion-this and Heartbreaking-Despair-that. And all of it because vampires are “immortal,” when, clearly, they’re not. I mean, sure, we don’t age, but we can be killed by tons of stuff. Like, uh, THE SUN. We can just get really, really old without showing it. Which makes us more like sea turtles than fallen angels, you know? Am I missing something here?

Okay, second, I don’t understand Louis. I mean, I know that guilt and alienation are supposed to be the hallmark of his age (it reminds me of the quote in that Hemingway novel about the “lost generation”--was Gertrude Stein a guilty vampire?!), but I just kept expecting him to stop acting like a little girl and get on with things. Armand was right--we’re just another creature under the sun. Figuratively speaking. What I mean is that God created us, and when He did, He must have known that we were mean ol’ predators. So what’s the big deal?

But, maybe I don’t understand. It’s the Eighties now, and they call my generation the Me-Nowers. As in this is Me, a Vampire, Now. I just can’t get behind all the poetic-y feelings about it. I mean, I’m angry that I’m gonna have to pay Social Security taxes forever and never reap the benefits, but it’s not making me cry bloody tears. I guess I’m just young. You’d probably say that I taste like a glass of Welch’s.

I actually did take part of a Philosophy class. Have you ever heard of this guy, Malthus?

As for "taking care of" Dan, that's another point where you need to get up to speed. The way you said "taking care of" made me feel like I'm in a mafia movie! As you probably know, I have Christian and conservative values that make revenge look bad, but even if I didn't, nobody settles their problems that way any more. Hello, counseling! Dan obviously needs some help, but I meant something more in the way of a reclining couch and someone to talk to about his mother. You say there are vampire careers--what about a vampire shrink?

It was neat to read about the old days. Please keep writing me, and I'll keep writing you. I've actually been kind of neglecting my art lately. I used to like to paint the sunrise, but that's obviously out. I'm going to have to go searching around town for some onyx-colored oils and a new subject matter. I'll let you know how it goes.

Au revoir!

Paulie Dori Williams

17 Magazine St.
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February 29th, 1984

Chère Paulie,

You raise so many gnawing questions!

Let me begin by apologizing for that biting tone in mine of last month, relative to your maker, but among our kind he is entitled to a traditional measure of authority over your movements and meals. He answers to me nevertheless. Even though times are changing, you will not want to test him too sorely, or those allied

to him (and here I discreetly exclude myself). You should be aware that what stands behind this traditional "order" is not simply the threat of force or of punishment. This is not quite the mafia. We all live with limitations, even those who do not precisely "live" at all.

You did not ask for an explanation, but I will offer it in any case, since it bears upon something I must come to later in this letter. The fundamental idea in our tradition, our common law, is that of "command," indeed, nothing short of divine command. As you know, when God created the light, He commanded the light into being. Such Words, such commands, are all that lie between the two orders of light and dark. In the dark, our limitations just are the very border of the world of light. We cannot cross into the light because of God's second act--when God set the darkness in its own realm to make a place for the light, the tension between our realm and theirs was established, and all beings, created or self-created (such as we are), have to conform to the order of the Word. Nearly all of our laws and traditions apply to our intercourse with mortals. We need no laws for dealing with one another, for here our natures provide the limits. You will not drink the blood of a brother or sister because it would bring on your second death, and you need not be taught that it is forbidden because your nature is repulsed at the very notion, and among us, desire and disgust are our most trustworthy guides.

You may defy your maker, in the near term, dear Paulie, but you are no longer a creature of the fickle light. The darkness is before the light and it shall be after, and, if I may presume to be familiar, it was not God that made thee, not as thou art. Defy thou the Word now and the Word defies thee later. For our kind, there is no evasion of consequences because evasion assumes that time will run out before the consequences of a choice or an action can come back around. But for us, all time has already become space, the space of the dark. Remember that for us, "now" simply means "here," and every "here" becomes, in time, every other. Defy your maker and you may safely ignore the question of when or whether you will be called to account. You will be. The only contingency is where you will be when it happens.

Are we just aging and failing to show it? No, Paulie, we are not. You no longer live in the order of withering time and devouring light, but only the Word, the command, protects you from the devastations of time and light. Light consumes itself and all that it touches, and time is the ultimate weapon of the light. Obey your maker. He occupies the wider part of the dark. He is obedient to me for the same reason that you must obey him, as indeed I obey those whose realms exceed my own. My command reaches farther than you can currently imagine, but you will begin to understand. The order of desire is beautiful.

As for your "Christian conservative values," as they are called these days, you will find that you can keep those in their entirety. There is no light in them and nothing that limits desire. Indeed, they are expressions of the darkness at the heart of mortal existence, born of fear and violence. They will serve you well in your new afterlife.

I am enclosing a little meditation on Christ, something I wrote centuries ago, in many ways a summation of all that was learned in the joint mortal and immortal inquiries of the Schoolmen. I have been revising and condensing it for centuries. I translated it into English not long after I arrived on these shores, to send to an odd little man from California I had discovered here. He taught at Harvard and certainly had Latin, but I felt this would be a good exercise for me in a new tongue. I will tell you about him some time, perhaps. His name was Royce and he looked like an insect of some kind. I pursued him for some years, but he had a preternatural sense of when I was closing in and took to hopping on ships leaving Boston harbor just as I arrived to drain him. Of course I did catch him eventually. In any case, you need not return the enclosure. I have other copies. It is the sort of writing that benefits from multiple readings over a long stretch of time, or, as I would say, in various places.

Be aware, Paulie, that a certain degree of indulgence is sometimes exercised toward the young, but the young, among the children of darkness, are also the ones who endure the most exquisite and creative punishments (and we are nothing if not

creative). It has been so for millennia, both among us and the mortals--indeed, we seem to carry over this (and certain other) weaknesses from the domain of the sun. To see a young, strong body suffer brutal physical violence has been a secret gratification of the mortal soul since the beginning, which, I think, may explain the popularity of the Passion story, and in the present century the continuing descent into explicit physical realism in their cinema.

An intriguing mortal philosopher named Michel Foucault has recently written an entire series of books tracing the history of this sort of twisted desire, from human medicine, to madness, to punishment, and finally to an inverted eros (supposedly perverse love). He points out that the institution of medicine commands into existence a class of "the sick," allowing others to be truly well, while the obsession with psychology creates "the mad" for the sake of defining the sane, and the prison created the prisoners so that others may see themselves as free. And finally the institutionalization of sexual desire creates the pervert. His (supposedly) normalized counterpart, since all erotic desire has been banished to darkness, is the self-emasculating confessor of his sins.

As you can see, Paulie, this Foucault has understood much of what I explained above about light and darkness. Do not underestimate the power of the Word. It forms both the existence you have and the conditions for its continuation.

And here, Paulie my friend, I must make a confession to you. It has been something of a calling for me, over the centuries, to interview (and sometimes to drain) the best philosophers I could catch. After the unhappy Aquinas incident, I tried to pursue philosophy much as I had before, without actually hunting philosophers, but I began slowly to suspect that I might learn more by seeking a deeper vein of wisdom, if you grasp my meaning.

Following the genuine desire for philosophical knowledge called forth in me the examination of that desire. Self-knowledge is the

ultimate destination of philosophy, and if for Socrates or the other wise mortals, self-knowledge begins in affirming their ignorance, for us it begins in embracing the tendency of our desire. Self-knowledge for a vampire is not good news, not the Gospel. But the bad news is more gratifying, as even mortals know. Notice the evening news, as they have come to admit, in a phrase worthy of our best poets--if it bleeds, it leads. The bad news that was so deeply satisfying for me was that merely talking to the great philosophical minds is never enough. What, after all, do they taste like?

It is true that many of the philosophers whose lives are now combined in my own are unknown today, indeed undiscoverable, in spite of their illustrious reputations in their own times. But a few names have survived. For example, I made a fine meal of Pico della Mirandola (who was headed for the stake in any case--which is what happened to Bruno before I could get to him). Descartes also escaped me. He ran to Sweden when he caught wind of my intention (an English traitor warned him). But a member of our Gothenburg Fellowship dispensed with the coward there. I have always regretted that someone else tasted Descartes.

Later I was able to corner the great Spinoza, and also Professor Hegel in Berlin, when he was made vulnerable by an epidemic we planned (always the easiest time to strike), and then there was that gloomy Dane, Kierkegaard, who was frankly eager to be martyred by a "demon" (which is what he called me, somewhat inaccurately). He is the one philosopher I have drained and regretted the decision. There was something not right with his blood. I felt sick unto second death for nigh on a year afterwards. I interviewed Nietzsche in 1877, but decided to let him live, for all the good it was doing him. I must say, he is the one mortal soul who ever inspired something like pity in me. He stole some of my ideas about free death, but I can hardly begrudge him that. We all take what we need from others, do we not?

Now Paulie, we come to the point. I thank you for your patience with all my explanations. But they were not offered casually. I

must ask you to do something for me, but you are a subtle girl and will understand that I am not simply asking. I have already communicated with your maker. Last summer I visited the clever Foucault in California, with the intention of draining him. I cannot quite describe what happened or how, except that after eight centuries of hunting and thinking I am difficult to surprise. For this event I can offer no precedent. It was strange, as though in draining him he was actually drawing my power at a rate exceeding my letting of his blood. For better or worse, I imagine that such would be the experience of biting a more powerful vampire, but clearly Foucault is nonesuch.

In any case, I am ashamed to say that I was unable to finish him off, and he has been walking around sort of half undead, ranting about power ever since. Paulie, you must go to France and finish what I started. You shall leave at the earliest possible date for Paris. I have already arranged for your reception with some of my former cohorts. Do not fail me.

Oh, and Thomas Malthus was actually one of our scientists (though not a very good one in my opinion), working in the early days of our discovery of the value of statistics; his calculations about increase of the human population were originally intended as part of a progressive argument for turning more of them. That is the damnable English and their pathetic humanitarian pleadings, again. Someone dragged him into the sun eventually. Conservative vampires last longer, Paulie.

Yours expectantly,

Étienne Lavec

A Meditation on the Word

By Étienne Lavec

In the beginning was the Word. No one disputes this. And through the Word was everything made that *was* made, without

question. But not everything that *is* was *made*, for the darkness awaited greedily the coming of the light, for a feast of the edges, for that share of light perched on the boundary of forever, unable to face the dark and taken from behind, slipping ever gently into eternity.

And the edge has a name, which is the turning of desire, for desire was before and desire will be after. The light is the advent of time, but time is the ordering of desire to an *eschaton*, to an immanent, eminent end, before which all the elders cast down their golden crowns. Desire brings *existence* both to time and to timelessness, making space into place.

In the pure dark, *all* is desire, which for convenience is *called* void, abyss, infinity, for how might one name total intention? From within the light the finite creatures face the darkness that is beyond them, feeling their own portion of darkness, that within each one, that which was before the light. The abyss lies within. Here is *desire for the infinite*, for immortality, for God, for some salvation. The darkness within bespeaks the primal call to the edges, and from those edges the children of darkness face outward, comprehending the endless night.

And here is the secret of all existence: the darkness does not comprehend the light, but *needs* it not, yet the light overcomes the darkness by *means* of the darkness that ever was, and that remains—below, above, behind, before and after the light. Only the darkness can sustain itself, and it is the darkness that sustains the light *as* light. Heaven and earth shall pass away indeed. Not one proposition is false in the Word, but the saying of the Word leaves at its boundary the *unsaid*. You will have life and have it more abundantly, but the gift of death is, after all, the end that makes the mortal life a well-lit path.

At the edge of life is all that moved and endured and never needed life, the undead, unsaid. Agapic love, the blood shed for you and many, the self-emptying Word, and all that God made, *is* light and in *Him* is no darkness at all. All true. But below and above, and indeed *within* the light is the *eros* that turns to *agape*, the insatiable thirst for the life force that is *not* the light but the greed for the light, the waiting darkness that sacrifices nothing, least of all itself, and draws into its immortal existence all that ever lives or ever *can* live.

The darkness will have its domain, as the Word decrees, but it waits for those who find that the light that is within them is

darkness indeed--that place within us all, uncreated and unloved by God. And how dark is that darkness? It is called *voluntatis*, the beast by whose conveyance we may cross from the edge of time into the immortal existence that is no blessing, but the possession of all that was made, as given by all that was unmade, uncreated, and which surrounds the light and comprehends it not. So be it.

June 26th, 1984

Dear Mr. Lavec,

I hope this letter gets to you--it's hard to know if you're sending a letter correctly in a country where no one speaks your language and postage looks weird and you're never, ever awake during post-office hours. It's not like I can just dispatch my faithful servants to ride bravely into the sunset and make sure my letter is delivered. Seriously--in the past few weeks, I've been wishing that this whole vampire business was a little less Anne Rice and a little more Middle-Earth. If I'd been a hobbit in Paris, at least I could enjoy the food without all these complications. But, then again, I guess I probably wouldn't have been a hobbit, since the light doesn't touch me, or whatever you're on about. I probably would have been an orc, and who knows where that would have gotten me.

Anyway, Mr. Lavec, this has been one heck of a study abroad trip. I'd never been further west than Arkansas or further north than Kentucky before a few weeks ago, and I'd never met a prime cut of philosopher. Actually, back when I was human, I thought philosophy was one of those things that people used to do but didn't do anymore but that we still had to learn about, like Latin. I had no idea people were still doing it. But, man, apparently they're still doing it here!

After I got off the boat (traveling, I might add, in a nice leather trunk of the sort that someone might take to international

boarding school. Coffins are so over.), it took me awhile to even find this Foucault guy, mostly because no one told me that you don't pronounce his name Faw-cull-it. Once I finally staked him out, it was hard to get a spare moment to sneak up and sink my teeth in, because he was too busy talking to people. Like, all night. I have never seen a more popular old and bald guy. The French have apparently never heard of the strong and silent type.

I thought about seducing him or trying to pose as a member of his social circle, but I had this weird feeling that I would look too . . . vanilla . . . at one of the French parties. Which is a pretty weird feeling for a vampire to have. And, anyway, he didn't seem like he'd be into me if I'd tried the candlelight and Motown approach. The guy is obviously paddling on the other side of the Seine, if you know what I mean.

When I finally did get him alone, it was just in the old fashioned, appearing-creepily-behind-you-while-you're-brushing-your-teeth way. I was a little worried, because you'd said he was sucking up all of your energy, but I actually didn't have any trouble at all. No offense, Mr. Lavec, but I kind of think it was in your head. I'm just saying, you spend enough time around these people. . . . I just held my nose, thought about football, and glubbed him down.

I was kind of wondering if you wanted me to make him a vampire before I met him, but, honestly, I was not interested in being the "divine creator" of this guy. He seemed like he'd have way too many questions, and in the wrong language.

So, it's done. I came all the way to France and killed the guy you asked me to kill. I never thought I'd see the City of Lights as a liege of Darkness, but what can you do? About that-I get that I am supposed to follow Dan Christensen around because he's kind of my father-figure and husband-figure in the Darkness, and that it's some sort of unbreakable vampire clause thing, but you asked me to keep you up with the times. I gotta tell you, then, that female submission, even vampire female submission, is very out. I've said this before, but you should really follow

fashion. The power suit with the shoulder pads? It means something. More specifically, it means Screw You, Chauvinist Pig.

I don't really mind hopping all over the globe for you, or even putting up with Dan sometimes. It's actually kind of fun. I'm just saying that one of these days I might put on my shoulder pads. You tell me not to press it. Well, don't press it yourself, Mr. Lavec. This is a new time.

Sincerely,

Paulie Dori

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Thursday, December 24, 1998 11:02 PM

From: "Etienne Lavec" <fangs1274@yahoo.com> [View contact details](#)

To: "Paulie Dori Williams" <rise.again.st@yahoo.com>

Chere Paulie,

It has been far too long, even by my lax standards. I got this e-mail address from Dan Christenson. He tells me you have been traveling the world, making contact and refining your palate. Good, very good. I think you must surely have settled in to your calling by now. I have only a question or two for you.

First, I am wondering what you make of this recent turn in mortal interest. This new television series about the supposed "Vampire slayer" is muddying the lore and causing all sorts of confusion. I am getting complaints from every quarter, teenaged girls wandering around with homemade stakes, taking martial arts classes, behaving recklessly. Indeed, we have actually lost a small handful of our comrades in southern California. Naturally, most of these plucky youngsters are behaving suicidally, but initially we were taken aback. In any case, I think that your advice would be most welcome. And if you also care to commit this matter to deep thought, I would personally like to hear your reflections on the meaning of what the mortals are up to. I cannot remember a time when the popular view of vampires was prone to dividing us into "good" and "bad" citizens.

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Second, and here I must request your utmost candor: Are you absolutely certain that Foucault is really dead? I think I am detecting in his (supposedly) posthumous publications certain vague references to happenings of the last dozen years, adjustments to the present that should not be in evidence. But that alone would not have raised my apprehension. There is something else. I have been receiving strange e-mails, just passages from Foucault's writings on desire in semi-anonymous e-mails. For example, I received the following just the other day, from someone who calls himself "Nietzsche26."

"The combative relationship with adversaries is also an agonistic relationship with oneself. The battle to be fought, the victory to be won, the defeat that one risks suffering—these were processes and events that take place between oneself and oneself. The adversaries the individual has to combat are not just within him, or close by; they are part of him."

That was all there was in the e-mail. This is almost a quote from the English translation of *The Use of Pleasure*, which was published after you did your work. The only difference is a change of tense, from the past tense to the present. This reads vaguely like a philosophical threat from someone familiar with my work. This is one of three similar communications I have received. I know Foucault had many friends and admirers, but after such a lapse of mortal time, I cannot imagine I might be the target of revenge. Have *you* received any odd anonymous communications? It is a bit unnerving, especially since I am not exactly free with my own e-mail address. I do notice that the timestamp on these e-mails is always at night, and we both know what that may mean.

Cordially,

Étienne

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Saturday, January 2, 1999 9:22 PM

From: "Paulie Dori Williams" <rise.again.st@yahoo.com>

To: "Etienne Lavec" <fangs1274@yahoo.com> [View contact details](#)

Dear mr. Lavec,

Sorry for the delay in answering—was away from e-mail during the prime hunting season. it's been awhile! I've often wondered what you've been up to—I left the continent in '89 and haven't been back west since. I'm writing you now from Berlin, where me and

a few other creatures of the night are living in a squat on what used to be soviet territory. It's an old butchershop, has sort of a pleasant odor and some very chic meathooks which we use as coathangers for our trenches.

So much has changed since we last spoke! I went to Germany the night before the wall came down, hoping that all the confusion would lead to some good kills. I had no idea I'd want to make Berlin my home. I'd been in eastern Europe for awhile, Doing the vampire grande tour, meeting the undead that are in those parts now (vampires, surprise, make terrible communists), and generally drifting. It was good for me to leave America, but I was totally mentally out-of-coffin for awhile, completely culture shocked. I'd been sheltered before. Death had seemed clean and routine—old people in white rooms. The soviet bloc taught me how to live a little, and it was fun while it lasted.

My style has changed. A lot. You mentioned Buffy the Vampire Slayer—if they got anything right, it's our clothes these days. Most of the other young vamps I know have found a sort of beat with the punks and the industrial kids over here. They remind us of ourselves—disillusioned, night owls, alienated from their past. And vampires have always been near anarchists. This group of outsiders is particularly unapologetic. So we thrifted their look. It works.

Okay, so you want to know my thoughts about the American “good” vampire idea. I have never ever met a real vampire who was in love with a mortal or had a soul. I've never even met a vampire who could give you an Oxford definition of what a soul would feel like if they had one. everyone thinks just because we're immortal we are supposed to know about the state of our salvation. I dunno how they got that idea.

In Buffy, it seems like not only do the vampires not have souls (maybe occupying some soul-neutral territory), they hate anybody with a soul and so continually threaten to suck the world into a hell dimension. Right, like we'd want to know what is in the great beyond more than them, when we're the ones that have Hypothetically spent the last thousand years in (Im)mortal sin. That just seems silly. Also, maybe it's the age, but why can't mortals conceive of an alternative society that exists without organizing?? The popularity of civil actions has addled their brains. Like we care enough about them to go to the trouble of opening a hell mouth just so, what, we could beat them? Rule over them? It's not like we have a lot of trouble with oppression in the first place. The truth is just that mortals are so bent on rehabilitation and reconciliation right now (counseling, self help, UN-style wars) that they can't understand how something could be evil without being just a misled good. So they go buck wild over some hunky and sensitive and souly vampire who makes original sin, vamp style, seem trifling in the face of meaning well. Give me a break. I think they're all just putting the fact that they're worried they're not good enough for god in a dark corner and

rehabilitating vampires because it makes them feel good. After all, if we can do it, anyone can.

As for Buffy herself, I'm glad she's not real, but I can't say I don't approve of the characterization. I like the female role model and how she settles things. I've actually been doing a lot of feminist and anarchist art since the wall fell. Think Cyndi Sherman meets graffiti meets the Vatican (the Vatican aesthetic is just thrown in there because it's vampirey). you should visit sometime; I actually have an upcoming exhibit at the reborn vampire theater. It's not really a theater anymore—more of a punk burlesque show.

As for Foucault, I wasn't lying. I thought I killed him, but there's always room for error. Maybe one of the Paris kids came behind me and turned him? I can imagine him having a few vampires in his circle. I haven't seen him around, but you never know. Let me know what you find out.

Cheers,

paulie Dori

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Sunday, January 17, 1999 1:14 AM

From: "Etienne Lavec" <fangs1274@yahoo.com> [View contact details](#)

To: "Paulie Dori Williams" <rise.again.st@yahoo.com>

Chere Paulie,

Thank you for your thoughtful reply. I think that you would almost have to be over here to grasp the magnitude of the cultural shift that is underway. And I do not care for it one iota. In the past two weeks I have had to deal with two unprecedented cases, vampires in the Bay area who staked other vampires to save a mortal. Everything is going to heaven in a handbasket.

I think your feeling of freedom over there, and even anarchy, is made possible only by the deeply embedded order that has prevailed for centuries among us. Anarchy is what we have over here, and I do not advise you to visit. I have considered returning to Paris myself, but I have a feeling my request would not be granted. You will find, Paulie, that the longer you remain with us, the less freedom you have.

I have received another odd message from nietzsche26, making vague reference to the unprecedented attacks, and time-stamped in the Pacific time zone. If it is not Foucault, it is someone who wants me to believe it is.

Yours patiently,

Étienne

26 aug 2005

rise.again.st: Hey! Etienne? Is that you?

fangs1274: What is this? Who are you?

rise.again.st: I'm IMing you

rise.again.st: This is paulie Dori! From memphis! Remember?

fangs1274: I was just typing on Dan Christenson's computer and your message popped up. How do I know it is really you? How does this thing work?

rise.again.st: Hello?

fangs1274: Yes? This is Etienne.

rise.again.st: You don't know it's me, but you're just gonna have to trust me. I saw the smiley icon beside your e-mail address in my contacts list. It said you were on-line

fangs1274: And so I am. I will make my own decisions about whom to trust. I see it is your e-mail address. But it seems as if anyone at all could be on the other side of the line.

rise.again.st: You can ask me a key question if you'd like.

fangs1274: What is a key question?

rise.again.st: A question like "what is your dog's name?" or "what kind of blood do you prefer?" Something only I would know

fangs1274: Who turned me?

rise.again.st: Some guy in the Thomas aquinas society of vampires in old times. Old mr. Whatchamacallit. I'd look it up, but all my letters got lost in Europe.

fangs1274: I hope the letters have not fallen into the hands of my enemies. That is close enough I suppose. It is good to hear from you Paulie. Where are you?

rise.again.st: Sorry. I have a forgiving memory. I lost them in Umbria, looking in vain for someone chaste to drain. there was a whole conference of philosophers there. you would've loved it

fangs1274: Well, it was a long time ago that I told you my story.

rise.again.st: I'm in sun valley, Idaho. But on the move. Where are you??

fangs1274: I have quickly abandoned home, taken a barge up to Baton Rouge, and I am staying with Dan Christensen. One day I must learn to drive. You may know that Dan is working the LSU students now. They are predicting that this hurricane will destroy New Orleans.

rise.again.st: They're a kinda seedier bunch than the Memphis kids. He's probably enjoying the challenge.

fangs1274: I will swoop in afterwards, but just now I want to see how events will unfold.

rise.again.st: Are they? Who is they? Are we behind this one?

fangs1274: You know, the mortal weather service. I have been thinking of moving home to Paris. What is in "Sun" Valley for those such as we are?

rise.again.st: Oh, I think I saw that in the lobby of my lodge last night. Looks pretty bad.

fangs1274: Heavens.

rise.again.st: Why Paris?

fangs1274: Well, there is no place like home. I heard that in a movie once, long before your time. And America has become startling, strange, and frankly dangerous.

rise.again.st: Well, as you know, I go with the flow, and these days Vanilla and well-ordered is the new corrupt and dark

fangs1274: That is exactly what I mean. I think I need to go where night is night and day is day.

rise.again.st: So me and some pals decided now was as good a time as any to learn about white wine marinated cooking and ski lifts.

fangs1274: I do not wish to be followed around by young teens dressed in black whose fondest wish is to be turned by me. This is worse than in the Buffy days.

rise.again.st: And that's still the case in Paris? Maybe in the suburbs.

fangs1274: I see. The ski lifts I can understand, but cooking is quite beyond the pale.

rise.again.st: I'd try Croatia. Or Egypt. One of those bad traffic and no rules cities.

fangs1274: I haven't been to Paris in a hundred years, but I assure you that they are not so slavish to trend as these American kids. But perhaps you are right.

rise.again.st: We don't eat it! I mean try it as an aesthetic. Duh.

fangs1274: Oh, well perhaps I have misunderstood. Why cook things you would not eat?

rise.again.st: I think you should give nouveau vampirism a spin! You've got an eternity to be bad and only so many years to be good when good is in. Why not?

fangs1274: I have heard that things have slowed down in Croatia. I may be too old to change Paulie. I think that we are safer where we are feared.

rise.again.st: It's a part of the lifestyle—my nest likes following human trends. Keeps us busy, and sometimes we even make friends with the people we do business with.

rise.again.st: Actually, how much have you read of the meyer books? She's a loon, but there are a few things she got right.

fangs1274: I have heard of this, second hand. Should I read it?

fangs1274: I think Dan has a copy.

fangs1274: He says he does.

fangs1274: All the rage?

fangs1274: What is this? Are you still there?

rise.again.st: No no, we're safer on the path of least resistance. Humans like us when there's no reason to fear us except for the fact that we can, if we choose, kill them. Danger makes us sexy but not actually dangerous, like a well chosen leather jacket on a high school kid.

fangs1274: Satan help me.

fangs1274: Is this why those young boys are following me around, talking about a vampire I never heard of that all their girlfriends worship?

rise.again.st: Meyer makes vampires like the dull and warm half of a Jane Austen fantasy sequence, as reimagined by today's best online fanfiction authors. Essentially. You probably shouldn't read it. It would make you mad.

rise.again.st: There's this guy Edward whose biggest personality flaw is his complete self sacrifice. He's a vampire but he only eats animals. And he loves a mortal girl who is completely helpless.

fangs1274: Oh, please. That is just a copy of Louis in the Anne Rice novel. I just cannot bear this pace of change Paulie. I need a nice little Romanian town, with superstitious Catholic peasants to gnaw on.

rise.again.st: And he lives with his vampire family in a well-lit house in the woods in Washington state

rise.again.st: But he is really wealthy and powerful and plays the piano and cooks well.

rise.again.st: They are able to live together because abstaining from human blood makes you more able to form close relationships with others.

fangs1274: Who wants close relationships? Have they learned nothing from their deaths?

rise.again.st: No no, because he's not really that resigned to being evil. Wanting to suck human blood is more like a weakness or psychological problem... Like alcoholism or promiscuity. It's our nature, but it is treatable with willpower and commitment

fangs1274: I am sorry Paulie, but that is simply twisted. I will not read such trash. The mortals will ignore this profanation.

rise.again.st: Well, in Meyer we form relationships that are not only healthy, but our eternal destinies

rise.again.st: No. No, it's actually exploding. Girls love it. The self sacrificing ultimate evil. You know it's great.

fangs1274: It makes me want to sunbathe.

rise.again.st: I mean, most of it is allegory for human love affairs, though not very realistic allegory. But some of it is true about us.

rise.again.st: Well, in meyer, we're not even destroyed by sun!

fangs1274: Did Stephenie Meyer study at Berkeley? With Foucault?

rise.again.st: Get this. We sparkle in the sunlight!

rise.again.st: Either berkeley or brigham young. One of those b universities

fangs1274: This reeks of Foucault. Have you heard anything more about him?

rise.again.st: Yeah, to her, sin is only a matter of words. But all the better for us! Don't you think? I mean, it was humans calling us sinners in the first place. Now we're more like superheros.

rise.again.st: No, not anything leading at least. You?

fangs1274: I have made so many adjustments in the last 800 years, Paulie, but this I simply cannot abide. If we allow ourselves to be admired by humans, we lose our power over them as soon as the "gleam" wears off. Fear is more powerful than admiration.

rise.again.st: Only to those who know no faith. Or whatever.

fangs1274: If this new author is a Mormon, then she has done to us what the Mormons did to Christianity. One extra twist in the chain of reasons and all the problems are reversed. The Mormons call Christians "gentiles." It is hilarious.

fangs1274: I think I know what I have to do.

rise.again.st: What do you mean?

rise.again.st: What do you have to do?

fangs1274: When this storm passes, I will go down, feed until I can hold no more, and then I am going to Paris to find out whether Foucault is really dead. I just know this is his doing. I have no intention to slight you, but I am convinced he is popularizing us.

rise.again.st: You mean she moved vampirism to a boring state and made it get married young and go on bicycle missions to other places?

rise.again.st: I don't know much about mormons.

fangs1274: Oh nevermind about the Mormons. They taste like unleavened bread.

rise.again.st: Nahhh, I was young. He probably did get away. But, listen, etienne.

fangs1274: Yes?

rise.again.st: The spirit of the times isn't revolution

rise.again.st: So don't get any fancy ideas

rise.again.st: The spirit of the times is irony

rise.again.st: Your best defense is to pretend you're into the new wave but never quite go all the way

rise.again.st: Like, are you serious or not? That's what people do these days.

fangs1274: I am listening, but I don't think I can do it Paulie. I think this has to be stopped.

fangs1274: I am just the vampire to do it.

fangs1274: I will put things back in their right places.

rise.again.st: Everyone gets all crazy when they can't feel comfortable anymore and starts talking about changing the system. You just gotta ride the good times while you can, is my idea. But, oh well. Why are you the chosen one?

rise.again.st: And how do you propose to do this? Meyer is getting translated and audiobooked. She's on a roll, pass the butter, you know.

fangs1274: Because I am the one who knows what we really are, the unloved of God that forms the limits of the light. We are the reverse of Christ, the order of erotic desire that draws into itself the life force, and that survives on the power of desire alone. We are beyond good and evil Paulie. We are the abyss, the Abgrund, les neantes! The pure for-itself, pour soi en soi, reinen Fürsichsein an sich!

fangs1274: I think it is Foucault. Two years ago I drained Jacques Derrida and he disappeared from view right away, but Foucault simply will not die. He still makes me dizzy, and someone is still sending me those vague threats, nietzsche26 is taunting me. To be truthful, that cad has dared me to come to Paris and find him, and he did so en français.

rise.again.st: So I guess soulmates and dream houses are out? Impossible and pointless?

fangs1274: I do not see how the soulless can have soulmates. Please do not fall under Foucault's awful spell. We are pure desire, Paulie, desire so powerful as to found and sustain its own existence, without God. Do me a favor. Do not mention my plan to anyone, not even Dan.

rise.again.st: But bear rug and fireplaces and anything on the rocks is in. Got it. Desire.

fangs1274: Right. I am hungry and Dan has just ushered a co-ed into the house. I will be in touch, if I can ever learn these new fangled machines (do you like my pun?).

rise.again.st: Yeah, Dan and I aren't bosom buddies or anything.

rise.again.st: I'll keep it quiet.

rise.again.st: So, should I head down to Nawleans for the feed?

rise.again.st: I haven't had enough fun since the democratic national convention a year back.

rise.again.st: Maybe I'll see you there.

fangs1274: It is hard to tell what will happen, but there is sure to be a lot of delightful chaos, plenty of government officials roaming around the lower wards.

fangs1274: Yes, if I see you, I'll be sure to show you some of the sights.

rise.again.st: The officials are tops in Nawleans and Chicago.

rise.again.st: Soon, mr. Lavec! See you soon!

fangs1274: They are!

fangs1274: Good bye

rise.again.st: Bye

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É: Hello! Paulie, I hAvve news for you@! 1.11.2009 3.41

P: Who is this? 31.10.2009 19.42

É: Étienne Lavec, from Pariss 1.11.2009 3.42

P: O! w/u? 31.10.2009 19.43

É: What? 1.11.2009 3.43

P: Whats going on? 31.10.2009 19.43

É: Apologies. Not my phone. Cell reception is bad. In the catacombs @&@ 1.11.2009 3.45

P: Paris? 31.10.2009 19.46

É: Yes. 1.11.2009 3.46

P: Who r u w/ ? 31.10.2009 19.48

É: friend named Blanchot. His i-phone. News is that 1.11.2009 3.50

É: We found Foucault after long time looking 1.11.2009 3.51

P: o cool. So he is vamp after all? 31.10.2009 19.53

É: yes he has been a pain to catch. Blanchot tracks well tho 1.11.2009 3.55

É: we meet Foucault in catacombs where are you paulie? 1.11.2009 3.56

P: omg. I am pretending to b a student at u wash n wash state. 31.10.2009 19.57

É: what is omg 1.11.2009 3.57

P: nevermind 31.10.2009 19.58

É: ah! He arrives 1.11.2009 4.01

P: ask him if I made him a vamp. I am curious 31.10.2009 20.02

É: no! 1.11.2009 4.05

P: etienne? Hello? Why not 31.10.2009 20.05

É: no I meant it appears 1.11.2009 4.07

P: hello?? 31.10.2009 20.10

P: you there? 31.10.2009 20.12

É: blanchot has led me into a trap paulie
1.11.2009 4.15

É: I ran to hide he has my whole life in this phone
@@ everything I ever wrote, pictures and pictures
1.11.2009 4.17

P: WTF? 31.10.2009 20.19

É: foucault says he wants to play 1.11.2009 4.21

É: play we will 1.11.2009 4.22

P: play? 31.10.2009 20.22

P: etienne? 31.10.2009 20.26

P: r u there? I will get help 31.10.2009 20.29

P: omg 31.10.2009 20.35